



THE UPRISINGS AND OCCUPATIONS IN IAȘI AND BUCHAREST DURING THE OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN WAR OF 1768–1774*

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Abstract

The principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia on the western border of the Ottoman Empire were directly exposed to the devastating effects of the eighteenth -century wars. The harsh conditions brought by war, such as disease, hunger, and famine, caused people to abandon their homes and lands, while also increasing discontent toward Ottoman administration. Russia's protectionist policies emphasizing Orthodox identity, along with various promises, led the local population to revolt and support Russia. First Ottomans sent orders to reduce the burden of war on the people, they issued two fatwas equating the rebels with the enemy in response to the uprisings and the facilitation of the Russian advance. In this article, I examine the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768–1774 through the lens of the occupations of Iași and Bucharest and the uprisings in these principalities, arguing that these events contributed to the Ottoman failure. The study addresses topics such as the revolts of the inhabitants of Iași and Bucharest and the fatwas issued by the Ottomans, which are only briefly mentioned in the existing literature. The article aims to emphasize the importance of regional dynamics in the Ottoman-Russian struggle and to fill gaps in the historiography of the 1768–1774 Ottoman-Russian War.

Keywords: 1768-1774 Ottoman-Russian war, Iași, Bucharest, Uprising, Fatwa.

1768-1774 OSMANLI RUS SAVAŞI'NDA YAŞ VE BÜKREŞ'TEKİ İSYANLAR VE İŞGALLER

Öz

Osmanlı Devleti'nin Batı sınırındaki Eflak ve Boğdan prenslikleri 18. yüzyılda yapılan savaşların yıkıcı etkilerine doğrudan maruz kalmıştır. Savaşın getirdiği hastalık, açlık ve kıtlık gibi ağır koşullar, halkın evlerini ve topraklarını terk etmelerine neden olurken Osmanlı yönetimine karşı hoşnutsuzluğu artırmıştır. Rusya'nın Ortodoks kimliğini öne çıkaran himaye politikaları ve çeşitli vaatleri yerel halkın isyan ederek Rusya'ya destek vermesine neden olmuştur. Osmanlı savaşın halkın üzerindeki yükünü azaltmak için emirler göndermiş; ancak çıkan isyanlar ve Rus ilerleyişinin kolaylaşması üzerine isyancıları düşmanla eş tutan iki fetva yayınlamıştır. Bu makalede, 1768-1774 Rus Savaşı'nı Yaş ve Bükreş'in işgalleri ile Eflak ve Boğdan prensliklerinde meydana gelen isyanlar özelinde ele alarak Osmanlı'nın başarısızlığının bir nedeni olarak incelemekteyim. Çalışmada, Yaş ve Bükreş halkının isyanları ve Osmanlı'nın yayınladığı fetva gibi literatürde yer almayan ya da kısaca geçirilmiş konulardan bahsedilmektedir. Bu yönüyle makale, Osmanlı-Rus mücadelesinde bölgesel dinamiklerin önemini vurgulamayı ve 1768-1774 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı'na dair literatürdeki boşlukları doldurmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 1768-1774 Osmanlı-Rusya savaşı, Yaş, Bükreş, İsyan

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Introduction

Literature on the 1768-1774 Russo-Türk War has focused largely on the Morea rebellion and Crimea's independence. Therefore, little attention has been paid to how the rebellions in Iași and Bucharest influenced the war. While the Ottoman defeat in the 1768-1774 Russo-Türk War is not directly related to the rebellions, a review of the relevant literature suggests that these rebellions were a significant factor influencing the outcome of the war. The most significant development demonstrating this is the Ottoman Empire's imposition of severe sanctions to quell the popular uprisings in centers such as Iași and Bucharest. It issued two fatwas (legal opinion), first against the Moldavia Principality and then against the Wallachia Principality, declaring that the rebel population would be treated as enemies (Uyanık, 2020; Beldiceanu, 1992).

Information about the rebellions that broke out in Iași and Bucharest during the 1768-1774 Russo-Türk War is extensively available in chronicles, periodicals, archival documents. In particular, Mühimme Defteri (Important Register) No. 168, which Ersin Kırca examined for his master's thesis, contains significant provisions on rebellions, banditry, and the transportation of agricultural products in the region. Western historians such as Joseph von Hammer, Nicolae Jorga, Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, and Virginia H. Aksan demonstrate that these rebellions provided an advantage to Russia. In her study on Ahmed Resmi Efendi, Aksan argues that the events in the Moldavia and Wallachia principalities negatively impacted the war. These studies and the information contained in archival documents indicate that the rebellions in Iași and Bucharest played a significant role in the Ottoman defeat during the conflict.

Under their agreement with the Ottoman Empire, the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia were obligated to pay tribute on time, act in accordance with Ottoman policies, provide logistical support during campaigns, and gather intelligence on European powers. These responsibilities highlight the strategic importance of the voivodes. Period chronicles and archival sources describe the region with expressions such as “the Ottoman granary,” “the eyes of the Sublime Porte,” and “the gateway to Istanbul.” In this context, monitoring agricultural production, supporting peasants, avoiding injustices, and keeping the *reaya* content were among the primary duties of the voivodes. During wartime, boyars (local noble landlords) were expected to join the Ottoman army with their troops, and ensuring their loyalty fell under the voivodes' responsibilities. During the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War, failure to fulfill these duties-particularly the disruption of army supplies and the boyars' support for Russia-significantly weakened Ottoman military power (Çiftçi, 2010; Bayram, 2021).

1. Location of Wallachia and Moldavia

Located on the western border of the Ottoman Empire in Eastern Europe, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were among the privileged provinces of the empire. Often referred to together due to their historical and cultural ties, these provinces were called “Memleketeyn”, meaning “two countries.” During the Ottoman period, Wallachia was the region between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube River in the south of present-day Romania while Moldavia comprised the lowland region between the Danube River and the Black Sea (Pitcher, 1999; Karasu C., 2002; Türkal, 2017).

The fact that these lands are called Eastern Europe derives primarily from their ethnic, religious and cultural characteristics rather than geographical borders. Indeed, ethnicity, religion and language are among the most decisive factors in the formation of Eastern European identity. Religion, in particular, has long united different ethnic groups under the roof of the Orthodox Church while separating Eastern Europe from the West. Orthodox Church, which dominated the region, constituted the basic dynamic of social unification. The Orthodox churches that ensured

this unity functioned as administrative, logistical and ideological centers of political movements and rebellions (Öztürk, 2019).

The towns of Iași and Bucharest, important centers of the trade network, were frequently invaded and destroyed (Uyanık, 2020). In 1659, Evliya Çelebi, who visited Iași, mentioned the commercial importance of the city, emphasized the piety of the inhabitants and described Bucharest as a large city with merchants and monasteries. Evliya Çelebi also said that Crimean and Ottoman soldiers suppressed the rebellions in Bucharest, leaving the city devastated (Baymak, 2010; Kahraman, 2010, 472, 485).

With the 1699 Treaty of Karlofça, which ceded Erdel to Austria, the Wallachian Principality became a direct neighbor of Austria, while Moldavia bordered Poland. These principalities, whose location conferred strategic advantages, were repeatedly attacked and invaded by the Russians and Austrians throughout the eighteenth century and were required to supply the Ottoman, Austrian and Russian armies with soldiers, food and logistical supports (Yüksel, 2019; Bayram, 2023).

The principalities were targeted by political and religious propaganda from Russia, beginning with the reign of the Peter the Great appeals to religious brotherhood proved particularly effective among the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The tsars and tsarinas who ascended the Russian throne continued Peter's policy, and the espionage network they created in the Balkans carried out intensive activities, especially during times of war (Aydın, 2013). During the war that started in 1768, the people of Iași and Bucharest revolted under the influence of this propaganda (Köse, 2006).

Following the alliance of the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia with the Russia in 1711 and the Russian occupation of Iași, the Ottomans became more directly involved in the administration of both centers (Uyanık, 2020). The Ottomans developed new strategies to mitigate material and moral losses. They reorganized the administration of these voivodates to ensure their continued loyalty and to prevent them from being influenced by religious propaganda. From 1711 onward in Moldavia and from 1715 onward in Wallachia, the central government appointed princes from Greek families of the Phanariote class (Castellan, 1993). These voivodes, who were Orthodox and belonged to noble and wealthy Byzantine families, were appointed with consideration for the ethnic and religious sensitivities of the local population. A common bond was established between the centrally appointed princes and the people through their shared "Orthodox Church" and "Greek origins." The aim was to neutralize Russian religious propaganda targeting the populations of the Danubian region (Gemil, 1981; Artan, 1995; Uyanık, 2020).²

The appointment of princes by the central Ottoman authority disturbed the Romanian boyars who had lost their political influence. Local boyars opposing Phanariot rule occasionally sought help and support from Austria or Russia (Jelavich, 2006). The Greek-origin voivodes, driven by aspirations to revive the Byzantine Empire, betrayed the Ottomans by forming various alliances with their enemies in line with promises made by Russia (Çiftçi, 2010).

1. Russian Influence and the Ottoman Borderlands Before the War

In the eighteenth century, the initial targets of the Austrian and Russian armies, which sought to seize Ottoman territories, were the towns of Iași and Bucharest. Russia's intervention in the

² In the eighteenth century, the increasingly powerful Russia posed a greater threat to the Ottoman Empire than the Catholic Austrian and Polish states (Gemil, 1981; Artan, 1995) The ceremonies for the voivodas who were appointed to office were subject to strict protocol. First of all, the prince would pledge his allegiance to the Ottoman sultan, upon arriving at his headquarters, he would sit in his chair after swearing on the Bible during a religious ceremony in the cathedral. This ceremony legitimized the prince in the eyes of the people (Uyanık, 2020).

voivodates of Wallachia and Moldavia was systematic and intensive planned from the early eighteenth century onward (Mustafayev, 2016).

Tsar Peter the Great³ (1682–1725) aimed to establish influence over the Orthodox populations living under Ottoman rule, particularly in the regions of Wallachia and Moldavia, and sought to expand Russian domination. Through wartime propaganda, he called on local populations to support Russia, incite uprisings, and rebel against the Ottoman Empire. Before attacking the Ottomans, Peter engaged in various efforts to provoke Orthodox Christians in the Balkans to rise up. In 1708, he even sent crucifixes bearing his image to churches in an attempt to gain their support (Demiroğlu, 2022; Altun, 2006).

In a memorandum sent to European states, Peter the Great declared that “the Greeks, Vlachs, Bulgarians, and Serbs have suffered oppression and cruelty under Ottoman rule” and stated that he would go to war to liberate Orthodox Christians from Ottoman domination. He further claimed that if everyone fulfilled their duty properly, “the savage Muslims” could be driven back as far as the deserts of Arabia. To incite the people, Peter used Greek priests, making them sign a declaration affirming their commitment; “When you advance on Istanbul, we, the Greeks in every town and village, will rise up with all our possessions, families, and lives, and capture the cities even before your arrival” (Kurat, 1951). The declaration also contained the statement: “Do not worry! The Ottoman Empire no longer possesses its former strength and power. It lacks both ammunition and money. Even if a campaign were to be launched, it could only muster fifty thousand soldiers. Due to financial hardship, both soldiers and commanders have become impoverished. Moreover, because of various frauds and injustices regarding their salaries, they have become disillusioned and turned their backs on the state” (Kurat, 1951). This greatly reassured Peter the Great. Peter’s network of spies placed in Istanbul included merchants, clergy, civil servants, and ordinary people, primarily drawn from Ottoman subjects and the Greek Orthodox Church. These spies not only gathered intelligence but also carried out various assassinations. On March 9, the day the Ottoman army reached Davutpaşa, five Greeks from the Christian populace, who had been swayed by Russian propaganda, were apprehended. These individuals were accused of attempting to spike the cannons destined for the military campaign. These activities demonstrate that the propaganda disseminated by the Russians had proven considerably effective. Following the confinement of the Russian envoy Tolstoy⁴ in Yedikule, the Tsar continued to obtain information about events in Istanbul through these spies. In instances where the spies’ intelligence was insufficient, the Tsar’s trusted source of information was the Prince of Moldavia. (Kurat, 1951; Göynüklü, 2019; BOA. AE. SMST. III, 158/12428).

During this period, the Voivode of Wallachia, Constantin Brâncoveanu, held secret talks with Peter the Great and promised that if the Russians entered Iași, he would supply the Russian army with provisions sufficient for several years and deliver thirty thousand people to serve the Tsar. He also pledged to encourage the Bulgarians and Serbs to rise up against the Ottomans. In recognition of his services, he was awarded the Order of St. Andrew, the highest honor of the Russian Empire (Kurat, 1951; Yıldız, 2006). In response, the Ottoman Empire appointed Dimitrie Cantemir, known for his loyalty and service, as the Voivode of Moldavia to counter Brancoveanu’s influence.

³ Known in Russian history as “Peter the Great,” the Russian statesman Peter the Great reigned from 1682 to 1725. He established a centralized absolutist government and transformed Russia from a tsarist state to an empire in 1721 (Keskin, 2023).

⁴ Graf Peyotr Andreyeviç Tolstoy (1645-1729), Russian diplomat and writer. He served as Russia’s first permanent ambassador to Istanbul between 1702 and 1714 (İnanır, 2004; Kemaloğlu, 2009).

However, Cantemir also chose to side with the Russian Tsar (Kantemir, 1998; Demiroğlu, 2022).⁵ Tsar Peter the Great issued a seventeen-article treaty to Cantemir upon his defection (Kurat, 1951).

The victory of Peter the Great at the Battle of Poltava (27 June 1709) had a significant impact on the boyars of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as the Romanian population. Weary of Tatar raids and the arbitrary actions of local rulers, the people of the region viewed this development as a turning point in their favor. Influenced by anti-Ottoman propaganda, many began to see the Russians as liberators (Kurat, 1951).⁶

Following the Russian crossing of the Dniester (Turla) River, Dimitrie Cantemir issued a proclamation urging the people of Moldavia to rise against the Ottomans and support the Tsar's army. This declaration was read by priests during church services across Moldavia and proved highly influential among the population (Kurat, 1951). With Cantemir's support, Tsar Peter advanced southward along the Prut River via Iași. On 11 June 1711, near Țuțora, the Russian army joined forces with Moldavian troops led by Cantemir and entered the town of Iași. Upon the Russians' arrival, some Moldavians attacked the Türk residing in Iași and other towns, selling captives into slavery and looting merchants' goods (Ekrem, 1993). Tsar Peter remained in Iași for three days, visiting churches and monasteries to display his religious devotion (Kurat, 1951; Kantemir, 1998).

Despite the betrayal of the rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia, Tsar Peter did not achieve the large-scale popular uprisings he had hoped, and he was ultimately defeated despite receiving support. Although the campaign brought little benefit to Peter himself, it later paved the way for future Russian successes (Yüksel, 2019). Like Russia, Austria also attempted to incite the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire during the 1716 - 1718 war. As a result of these efforts, it captured the Temeşvar Fortress, which was of strategic importance for the security of Moldavia (Yıldırım, 2016).

In 1739, taking advantage of the Ottoman Empire's war with Iran, the Russians launched their campaign to capture the northern Black Sea region and Crimea, ultimately aiming to pass through the straits into the Mediterranean, by attacking the fortress of Azov (Kurtaran, 2014). Initially, they intervened in Poland under various pretexts, secured an agreement with Austria, and had their candidate, Augustus III, crowned king. When Russia violated the treaty and invaded Ottoman territory, Austria soon joined the war. During the conflict, uprisings in Wallachia and Moldavia facilitated Austrian and Russian advances, and Austrian forces under Gilani⁷ entered Bucharest (Uzunçarşılı, 1988 ; Hammer, 1991).

The Russian army, under the command of General Münnich, captured the fortress of Khotyn and entered Iași on September 3. Boyars, Orthodox clergymen, and others who had defected to the Russian side, or sought to escape Ottoman and Phanariote rule, supported the Russian forces. The

⁵ Kantemir writes that he entered the service of the Russian Tsar after the Ottomans demanded unbearable obligations from him, namely the Moldavia Principality (Kantemir, 1998); the Wallachian and Moldavia voivodes sent an ambassador to Peter I, informing him that in any war, all Serbians, Bulgarians and principalities would act together with the Russians (Demiroğlu, 2022).

⁶ During the Prut campaign, some irregular troops in the Ottoman army burned the empty houses and destroyed the fields after the villagers fled to the mountains. This behavior intimidated the people and contributed to their defection to the Russian side (Kurat, 1951).

⁷ General Gilani: Austrian army commander in the Ottoman-Russian and Austrian Wars of 1736-1739. He commanded light and heavy cavalry (Hammer, 1991).

people of Iași, pleased to see the Russians, welcomed them warmly (Köse, 2006; Sözen, 2000).⁸ General Münnich, who attended a prayer service at the church, kissed the Bible extended by the metropolitan but pushed away the cross, even laughing during the prayer. This behavior negatively impacted the local population, who had viewed the Russians as liberators. Münnich stayed in Iași for a week, used the royal palace, and hosted banquets daily for bishops, officials, and boyars. Before leaving, he stationed troops at key positions and declared new regulations for the people of Moldavia. He threatened to burn Iași if the boyars did not comply with the rules and forced them to sign the document. During the Russian occupation, homes, monasteries, and churches in Iași were plundered, and the people were subjected to various forms of mistreatment (Ekrem, 1993).⁹

The Ottoman Empire appointed Mehmed Pasha, governor of İbrail, to liberate Iași. During the Russian occupation, Moldavian Voivode Grigori Ghika had been in İbrail. The Ottoman army, arriving to expel the Russians from Iași, was welcomed with joy. Following the Treaty of Belgrade signed on 8 September 1739, Russian forces withdrew from the city (Uzunçarşılı, 1988). After the devastation caused by the Russian occupation, the people of Iași struck by a plague outbreak. Voivode Ghika then toured various towns in Moldavia and eventually returned to Iași, which had fallen into poverty and misery after the war (Ekrem, 1993).

After the war, several Phanariote administrators, especially Constantin Mavrocordatos (1730–1769), implemented fiscal, social, and administrative reforms in an attempt to improve governance in Wallachia and Moldavia and alleviate the hardships endured. Mavrocordatos' tax reforms, aimed at preventing the flight of peasants, were particularly significant (Sözen, 2000; Jelavich, 2006; Çiftçi, 2010).¹⁰

2. Wallachia and Moldavia in Troubled Frontiers

Within the Ottoman Empire's borderlands stretching from both the northern and southern banks of the Danube River to the Dniester River, lay the regions of Rumelia, Wallachia, Moldavia, and Bucak. The boundaries of the Wallachian Principality included the area north of the Danube, bordered by the Banat Province to the west, Moldavia and Transylvania to the north, and the Danube River to the east. Moldavia, located to the north of Wallachia, was bordered by the Prut River to the east, the Eastern Carpathian Mountains to the west, and Poland to the north (Aksan, 1997).

Prior to the 1768–1774 Ottoman-Russian War, the peasant population in Wallachia and Moldavia experienced severe hardships due to the deterioration of the Ottoman fiscal system, which led to increasing tax burdens and declining security. The growing instability in the region encouraged banditry, reduced the population, disrupted agricultural production, and produced widespread famine and outbreaks of disease, particularly the plague. Peasants were forced to pay taxes both

⁸ Greek priests toured churches under various pretexts, such as offering bells as gifts, and engaged in pro-Russian propaganda. As a result of their priests' propaganda, Ottoman subjects in the Balkans viewed the Russians as protectors and saviors. General Münnich presented a project he had prepared on this subject to the Tsar in 1723. Accordingly, the Greeks should be encouraged to revolt, using the rhetoric of a sacred movement. Meanwhile, Crimea and Moldavia should be seized, and a march towards Istanbul should be launched (Köse, 2006; Sözen, 2000).

⁹ General Münnich's policies, coupled with Russian soldiers even plundering monasteries in Moldavia, led to the support of the people and the boyars for the Ottomans. When Münnich left the region, he sent all the people of Khotyn and Chernivtsi to Moscow as slaves. Chronicles describe this as follows: "He separated children from their mothers, women from their husbands, and men from women, and sold them mercilessly. In winter, tears flowed from the people's eyes like torrents, and their clamor and weeping rose to the heavens (Ekrem, 1993).

¹⁰ Konstantin Mavrokordato was appointed prince of Wallachia six times and prince of Moldavia four times (Sözen, 2000; Jelavich, 2006; Çiftçi, 2010).

to local landowners and the Ottoman administration, and under conditions of war and mismanagement, many began abandoning their lands. Some groups migrated across the Carpathians to Transylvania, while others crossed the Danube to the south or moved north toward the Black Sea. Abandoned villages and farmlands were then occupied by irregular soldiers, local militias, and Janissaries-mostly Muslim elements. In response to this disorder along the frontier, the Ottoman central government attempted to intervene by sending orders to the voivodes, instructing them to treat the population with justice and compassion and to end administrative abuses (BOA, AE. SSLM. III, 4/199; BOA, C.HR, 132/6557; BOA, C.MTZ, 20/983).¹¹ At the same time, various administrative and military measures were taken to prevent the peasants from abandoning their settlements. Within this framework, in 1760, at the request of the Voivode of Wallachia, Iskerlet Ligor, a delegation led by Giritli Hacı Ahmed was appointed to investigate the situation and propose remedies (Gündoğdu, 2015).¹²

The political turmoil caused by the war weakened the central authority in the principalities, as local nobles exploited the resulting power vacuum for their own interests. Supported by Russian and Austrian interventions, these elements frequently rebelled, deepening regional instability (Aksan, 1997).

Some of the Phanariot princes appointed by the Ottomans to strengthen central authority instead cooperated with Russia, motivated by their Orthodox identity and their aspiration to restore Byzantium. This contributed to the erosion of Ottomans power in the region (Jelavich, 2006). In the declaration issued by Catherine II (1762-1796) on January 19, 1769, which she expressed as “liberate all slaves under Türk rule,” she declared that all Slavic peoples were of Russian origin, referencing the “unifying” Russian policies pursued since the time of Tsar Peter. Furthermore, the people of Wallachia and Moldavia were promised a form of independence under Russian auspices (Jorga, 2005). Under the influence of the difficulties experienced in the region and the propaganda during the war, some boyars and some villagers, who shared religious and ethnic ties with Russia, looked favourably on Russian protection - forgetting the abuses committed by General Münnich during the previous war (Aksan, 2005; Kurat, 1951).¹³

In the eighteenth century, the partition of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, together with Poland, emerged as another source of rivalry between Russia and Austria. Russia's advance

¹¹ The Ottoman Empire was consistently sensitive to public peace and frequently issued orders to the governors urging them to be just and not oppress the people. The sultan wrote that Wallachia was a legacy inherited from his ancestors, and that its people should be ensured happiness and prosperity, free from oppression or injustice (BOA, AE.SSLM.III, 89/6859). A decree also addressed the punishment of soldiers who oppressed the people of Wallachia (BOA, C.HR, 132/6557). While the offenses committed by the subjects and boyars of the “Memleketeyn” during the war with Russia were pardoned, another decree stipulated that boyars who disturbed public order were to be arrested and imprisoned (BOA, C.MTZ, 20/983). The archives contain a wealth of documents on this subject. Instead of the general statement ‘the archives contain a wealth of documents on this subject,’ it would be more effective to provide a few specific examples of these documents.

¹² This treatise contains detailed information about Albanian bandits in Wallachia, the lands seized by the Janissaries, and the illegal seizure of public property. A new regulation was drawn up to address the problems in the region (Gündoğdu, 2015).

¹³ Baron de Tott wrote about what he saw while passing through Moldavia. In 1769, at the very beginning of the war, the people, terrified by the raids of certain troops, fled the region, their lands and crops were looted. Everything was burned and destroyed, and the harvest was lost, and the army's necessary supplies could not be obtained. Tott stated that deserters occupied the abandoned houses and that the fleeing villagers had no shelter until they reached Yedikule (Aksan, 2005); Sven Agrell, the Swedish ambassador in Istanbul during the Prut campaign, stated that the principalities would face even greater hardship under Russian rule (Kurat, 1951).

into Eastern Europe unsettled Austria, and in order to protect its regional interests, it signed a treaty of alliance with the Ottomans in July 1771 (Aksan, 1997; Uzunçarşılı, 1988; Demiroğlu, 2022).¹⁴

3. The Beginning of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774

The Russians had been steadily executing a long-term strategic plan since the beginning of the century. This gradual implementation raised concerns not only within the Ottoman Empire but also among various European powers. The death of Augustus III in 1763 provided Russia with an opportunity to strengthen its regional dominance. On 7 September 1764, Stanislaus August Poniatowski (1763–1813), who enjoyed the support of Empress Catherine II, was elected King of Poland (Beydilli, 2007).

The imposition of a monarch favored by Russia on the Polish throne contradicted Ottoman interests. For the Ottoman Empire, having a pro-Ottoman ruler in Poland was seen as essential for maintaining influence in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania, and for securing its European territories more broadly (Çakar, 2016). Russia's insistence on this matter disrupted the long-standing peace and compelled the Ottoman state to begin preparations for war. In response, the Ottoman government intensified its diplomatic efforts, pursuing a strategy rooted in balance-of-power politics. It publicly declared that Russia's violation of existing agreements was the primary cause of the conflict and sought to inform other states in the region accordingly (Çalışkan, 2000).

The outbreak of the 1768–1774 war was closely linked to the shifting balance of power in eighteenth century Eastern Europe. During this period, Austria, Russia, and Prussia emerged as the dominant actors in the region. The strategic plans they developed in line with their own interests had significant repercussions not only for Eastern Europe but also for the Ottoman Empire, which held territories in the area. At times these states acted independently; at others, they formed alliances-often directed against the Ottomans. Yet when their interests diverged, they occasionally aligned themselves with the Ottoman Empire (Beydilli, 1985).

Both Frederick the Great of Prussia and Empress Maria Theresa of Austria were disturbed by Russia's intervention in Polish affairs, but neither was willing to engage in direct conflict with Russia. They instead preferred that the Ottoman Empire confront Russia. Their involvement in the matter was limited to diplomatic measures framed around preserving borders and resolving the Polish issue fairly. As a result of these negotiations, and the concessions he received from Poniatowski, Prussia ultimately recognized his kingship over Poland (Aksan, 1997; Sorel, 2016).

Disturbed by Russia and Prussia's imposition of their preferred policies on the newly elected Polish king, a group of Polish patriots established the Bar Confederation to defend their homeland. Using the dissolution of this confederation as a pretext, the Russian army entered Polish territory and pursued the fleeing Polish nationalists into the town of Balta in Crimea, where they also massacred the local Muslim population (Çalışkan, 2000; Baykal, 1941). This violation of Ottoman territory by Russian forces provoked deep concern within the Ottoman administration and among the people of Istanbul. Meanwhile, a delegation representing the Polish opposition arrived in Istanbul to request Ottoman assistance. In response to these developments, the Ottoman imperial

¹⁴ When Austria joined the agreement between Prussia and Russia to partition Poland, the alliance treaty did not bring any benefit to the Ottomans (Aksan, 1997; Uzunçarşılı, 1988). Moreover, the policy implemented by Russia regarding the Orthodox Union was directed not only against the Ottomans but also against Austria. In January 1738, the Serbian Patriarch IV. Arsenije Covanovic wrote to Tsarina Anna Ivanovna, asking the Russians to help the Orthodox people. In the same year, a letter from Evfimiye Damjjanovic, the Metropolitan of Novi Pazar, asked Austria to ease the religious restrictions it had imposed on the Orthodox people (Demiroğlu, 2022).

court convened several *meşveret meclisi* (consultation councils) at the Enderun Palace, ultimately deciding to declare war against Russia on 4 October 1768 (Çalışkan, 2000; Uzunçarşılı, 1988).¹⁵

Russia's incursion into the town of Balta, located on Ottoman territory, is often cited as the immediate cause of the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War. However, the deeper source of conflict lay not in a single incident but in the broader for regional dominance. As Virginia Aksan notes, while Russia provoked the war, France encouraged it, Prussia attempted to prevent it, Austria feared it, and Britain remained indifferent. In this context, the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia on 6 October 1768, prematurely and without adequate preparation (Aksan, 1997).¹⁶ By the following spring, the Ottomans had begun stockpiling provisions in the regions expected to become active war zones and had also begun preparing military units from the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia (Karasu H., 2017).

Taking advantage of the Ottomans' premature declaration of war, Russia promptly completed its military preparations and organized three separate armies. The First Army, composed of 70,000 soldiers under the command of Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn, was assigned to secure Kamenets in Poland and advance toward the fortress of Khotyn, with the objective of capturing Iași and Bucharest. The Second Army, led by Pyotr Aleksandrovich Rumyantsev and consisting of 40,000 troops, was stationed in Ukraine to defend the area between the Southern Bug and the Northern Donets rivers. The Third Army, positioned in central Poland, was tasked with suppressing the Bar Confederation and providing support to the First Army if necessary (Jorga, 2005; Aksan, 2010).

3.1. The Road to the Town of Iași; Khotyn Fortress

Khotyn Fortress, situated in northern Moldova on the right bank of the Dniester River, was a key Ottoman stronghold on the empire's border with Poland. Its strategic importance grew after the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, and in 1711, it was removed from the jurisdiction of the Principality of Moldavia and placed directly under the control of Istanbul (Kolodziejczyk, 1998; Fedekar, 2019; Bıyık, 2014).¹⁷

Since the Ottoman route to Poland and the Russian routes to Moldavia and Wallachia passed through this fortress, the Russians' first strategic move was to cross the Dniester River and seize Khotyn Fortress, then proceed toward the city of Iași. The objective of this offensive was to advance as far as the Danube and sever the Ottoman Empire's connection with the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. A key part of the plan was to exploit existing unrest in the principalities

¹⁵ After the Ottoman declaration of war, the Sultan Mustafa the third wrote a letter to the King of Poland expressing the Ottoman Empire's peaceful and protective stance toward the Polish Republic. Unlike in previous centuries, Ottoman-Polish relations developed peacefully during this period, with the Ottoman Empire safeguarding Polish lands against the Russian incursions. The letter stated: "Since the Treaty of Karlowitz, Poland and its people have been treated with compassion, aid, and kindness. Neither our soldiers along the border nor the Crimean Khans have attacked Polish lands, and the Polish people have been comfortable, peaceful, and secure in their homeland." This letter not only addresses the Ottoman Empire's protective stance toward Poland but also Russia's encroachments on Polish territory (Çalışkan, 2000; Uzunçarşılı, 1988).

¹⁶ Aksan expressed these reasons as the problem of Poland's struggle for survival, Russia's growing power to threaten the Ottomans, French pressure on the Empire, Tatar raids, and Russian intervention in Wallachia and Moldavia (Aksan, 1997).

¹⁷ Khotyn Castle was an important border fortress on the Dniester on the frontier with Poland (Kolodziejczyk, 1998). It was returned to Moldavia under the agreement made with Poland on October 9, 1621, during the reign of Osman II. In 1711, however, it was removed from Moldavian control and placed directly under Istanbul as a administrative unit (sanjak) (Fedekar, 2019). Evliya Çelebi described Khotyn as a small fortress resembling a palanquin, with seventy villages under the control of the prince of Moldavia (Baymak, 2014: Dariusz, 1998).

and secure the support of the boyars and local population to facilitate occupation. The Ottoman counteroffensive likewise aimed to advance first toward Khotyn. From there, the plan involved joining the Bar Confederates at Kamenets and moving on to Warsaw, deposing Poniatowski, and driving Russian troops out of Poland. The campaign would then continue in two directions, toward Kyiv and Smolensk. Meanwhile, the Crimean Khan would attack Little Russia with his forces, while a third army, supported by the Caucasian peoples, would advance toward Astrakhan (Şirokorad, 2013).¹⁸

Khotyn was attacked by Russian forces on three separate occasions. The first assault occurred in early May 1769, when troops under the command of Prince Galitzin launched an offensive against the fortress. The Russian objective was not only to capture Khotyn but also to seize the fortresses of Bender and İbrail. During the siege of Khotyn, a Polish boyar allied with the Crimean Khan provided intelligence to Hasan Pasha, the fortress commander, reporting that the Russian army consisted of approximately 60,000 Russian troops, 5,000 Poles, 5,000 Moldavians, and 10,000 Cossacks (Demir, 2013). Following the repulsion of the initial attack, a second Russian assault occurred in August but was also successfully halted. Unable to break the siege, the Russian forces retreated across the Dniester River. As Moldovanlı Ali Pasha pursued the withdrawing troops, a torrential rainstorm caused the bridge to collapse, separating the Ottoman vanguard from the rear guard. Taking advantage of the situation, Russian forces launched a surprise night raid against the isolated Ottoman vanguard, resulting in heavy casualties and numerous captives. In the aftermath of this defeat, the Ottoman army retreated toward Isakçı, and the garrison stationed in Khotyn abandoned the fortress.¹⁹ In September, Russian troops entered the now-defenseless Khotyn, seizing its stockpiles of ammunition, military equipment, and 180 cannons without resistance. This development left Iași and Bucharest vulnerable to Russian offensives (Köksal, 2011; Zinkeisen, 2011). The fall of Khotyn significantly empowered the Moldavian insurgents, who then attacked Ottoman forces retreating toward Kalas. In response, the Ottoman troops were forced to withdraw further, reaching as far as the Çorçoleş depot (Çetin, 2017).

3.1.1. Treachery of Ligor (Yanakizâde), Voivode of Moldavia (1764-1767)

When the war began, Yanakizade Ligor was appointed prince in Moldavia, and İskeletzade Ligor in Wallachia. İskerletzade Ligor was appointed prince of Wallachia in 1765 (BOA, C.HR, 127/6313; BOA, C.MTZ, 17/834).²⁰ After Ligor became voivode, he sent important information to Istanbul regarding the situation of the Austrian and Russian states and their activities on the

¹⁸ At a consultation meeting while the Ottoman army was stationed in Isakçı, the question of whether to advance to Özi or Khotyn was debated. Ultimately, the decision was made to march on Bender, as its location between Özi and Khotyn would allow it to provide support to both sides (Uzunçarşılı, 1988).

¹⁹ Due to Mehmed Emin Pasha's inadequacy, the commander-in-chief's seal was given to Moldovanlı (Canikli) Ali Pasha, the Iași Guard. However, Moldovanlı Ali Pasha's term as commander-in chief lasted only four months. The defeat at Khotyn, and particularly the failed bridge incident over the Dniester River, led to his dismissal. İvazzade Halil Pasha was then appointed commander-in chief on December 16, 1769 (Çalışkan, 2000).

²⁰ During the 1768–1774 Ottoman-Russian Wars, voivodes from the Kalimaki and Gika families ruled in Wallachia and Moldavia. İskerletzâde Ligor Alexandr Gika was the fifth prince from the Gika family. He served twice as the prince of Moldavia, first from 1764 to 1767 and again from 1774 to 1777 (Salık, 2022). Voivodes were expected to remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire (BOA, C.HR. 127/6313). After their appointments, official orders would often emphasize that their loyalty and integrity had been the basis for their selection, and that they were responsible for maintaining public order and ensuring the welfare of the population. The state instructed voivodes to preserve peace and stability and demanded that Ottoman officials refrain from oppressing the people. These orders also stipulated that the province was to remain free and its inhabitants exempt from all kinds of levies (BOA, C.MTZ, 17/834). Despite these measures, violations occurred due to various reasons, such as greed, nationalism, religion, or the weakness of central authority. The state did not tolerate arbitrary actions or acts of betrayal and would punish voivodes with exile, execution, or confiscation of property (Uzunçarşılı, 1988).

border. However, when the war began, information obtained from captured prisoners and letters sent by Polish nobles who had sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire conveyed to Ottoman authorities that Ligor was collaborating with the Russians. The rebels, ignored by Ligor, placed cannons in Iași and surrounding monasteries, creating a defensive line that would facilitate the Russians' fight against the Ottoman forces (Çalışkan, 2000; Osmanlioğlu, 2017; Salık, 2022; Uzunçarşılı, 1988).

Meanwhile, Polish boyars fighting in the Ottoman army complained that the Moldavian prince had failed to assist them on their way to the Hungarian side. They wrote that while attempting to purchase grain from Moldavia, they were attacked by the prince and subjected to oppression and cruelty. They requested that the prince be given orders to ensure their safe passage through Moldavia. A petition sent by the Polish boyars also highlighted the threat of a Russian alliance with the Moldavian voivode. According to them, the combined forces of the two sides would destroy the Khotyn district. Meanwhile, the letter added that Russia was attempting to incite the Ottoman subjects to rebel (Çakar, 2016).

One of the three Russian prisoners captured near Bender and sent to the army stated that he was in the service of Yani, a Moldavian captain. He claimed to have crossed from Iași to the Russian side at the outbreak of the war, and that he supported the Russians attacking Bender with a deed from the Moldavian voivode. He also stated that around 200 carts loaded with grain were sent to the Russians by the Moldavian prince at this time. Previously, the grain requested for the Bender and Khotyn fortresses had not been sent from Ligor; this statement revealed that the grain had been sent to Russia (Osmanlioğlu, 2017). After being questioned about these matters, the prince of Moldavia was arrested and sent to Istanbul. Three boyars were assigned to protect the region until a new prince was appointed. On July 23, 1769, Nikolay Constantine, son of Iskerlet, was appointed prince of Moldavia (Çalışkan, 2000; Göksu, 2007).

While Serdar Ivazzade Halil Pasha, encamped for the winter on Mount Babadağ, was preparing for a campaign, the Russians launched a three-pronged attack. At the head of the Russian army was Romanzov, the Ukrainian forces commander appointed by Catherine II to replace Galiçin. Crimean Khan Kaplan Giray and the Moldavian Serasker Abdi Pasha, seeking to expel the Russians from Moldavia, launched a counterattack but were repelled by Romanzov (Yavuz, 2012).

In the summer of 1770, the Kantakouzen brothers Pirvu and Mihail, two prominent figures in Bucharest, the elder Nicholas Brinkoveanu, Metropolitan Gregor, the scholar Chesarie, and his colleague Filaret traveled to Petersburg to express their gratitude to the Empress. Bishop Innocentius of Husili, two clergymen, and two boyars also traveled from Iași for this purpose (Jorga, 2005).²¹

3.1.2. Revolt in Moldavia

The Russian occupation of Khotyn left the territories of Wallachia and Moldavia vulnerable to further Russian incursions. After capturing the fortress, Russian forces advanced toward Iași. During this period, a portion of the Moldavian boyars and local population sent an envoy to Prince

²¹ Representatives of the Moldavian and Wallachian nobility-including Bishop Innocent of Husili, Gregory of Bucharest, three bishops (among them the future Rumnic Bishop of Chesarie), two abbots, and three boyars-Mihail Kantakouzen, Nicholas Brinkoveanu, and Millo of Moldavia-appeared before the Empress and pleaded in Slavic for the liberation of their homeland. They believed that Russia would grant them genuine rights, which they defined as the expansion of the southern borders, a reduction of tribute, the establishment of a national army, the exclusion of foreigners from state positions, the free election of princes, and their perpetual rule. To support their claims, they brought with them old treaties dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Jorga, 2005).

Galitzin in July, declaring their willingness to submit to the protection of the Empress of Russia (Zinkeisen, 2017; Hammer, 1991). One of the Moldavian boyars serving in the Russian army, Kantakouzenos, entered Iași with a detachment of 400 men and captured the Moldavian Voivode, Grigore Ghica (Uzunçarşılı, 1988).

After capturing Khotyn, Baron Elempt, relying on the agreement made with the local insurgents, advanced with a force of 10,000 men and crossed the Prut River into Moldavian territory. While the Moldavian Serasker (commander-in-chief) Abaza Mehmed Pasha, was engaged in combat with enemy forces outside the city, insurgents in Iași attacked Ottoman officials using wooden sticks and tools they had seized, and they captured and neutralized the voivode. When Mehmed Pasha arrived in the town, he was unable to fight the rebels because he had only a small number of men, about 5-10. He was forced to leave the town and go across the Prut River (Çalışkan, 2000).

Thanks to the support of the insurgents, Elempt was able to advance with ease and entered Iași on September 26, triumphantly portraying himself as a victorious hero. The Moldavian population welcomed the Russian forces with great enthusiasm. To commemorate their “liberation” from Ottoman rule, a thanksgiving banquet was held at the Iași Cathedral, where the boyars formally pledged allegiance to Russia. Shortly thereafter, Empress Catherine Alexeyevna’s sovereignty was proclaimed, and Moldavia was declared under Russian administration. Romanian and Albanian volunteers, who had played a significant role in the fall of Iași, also supported Colonel Karazin in his campaign to capture Bucharest (Jorga, 2005; Uzunçarşılı, 1988; Göksu, 2007).

Abaza Mehmed Pasha, Canikli Ali Pasha, the Moldavian boyar Konstantin, and the Crimean Khan Devlet Giray found themselves in a difficult position due to the uprising (Çalışkan, 2000).¹⁵ Ottoman troops, in particular, suffered from severe food shortages, as no grain shipments arrived from Moldavia. Moreover, insurgents attacked supply depots, depriving the army of vital provisions. Iskerletzade Konstantin, one of the Moldavian boyars supporting the Ottoman side, urged the rebels not to fall for the enemy’s deceit and called upon them to join his efforts in resisting the Russians-yet his appeal yielded no results (Çetin, 2017; Kırca, 2007). When the Crimean Khan and the serdar (the commander-in-chief) consulted the Sheikh al-Islam on how to respond to the Moldavian disloyalty, a fatwa was issued. However, even before this legal opinion, the sultan had instructed that the boyars first counseled and admonished (Kırca, 2007):²²

The boyars of Moldavia are warned that if they remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire and assist the Muslim army by expelling the Russians from their midst, they will be granted amnesty and exempted from taxes for three to four years due to their current hardships. However, if they continue to support the Russians and persist in their disloyalty, their properties will be plundered, they will be killed, and their families taken captive. These conditions are to be communicated through the Moldavian prince and reported to the Khan (Çalışkan, 2000, p. 92).

A question was posed to the Sheikh al-Islam regarding how to deal with rebellious subjects:

Question:

In the region of Moldavia, if some dhimmis (non-Muslim subjects) from a few villages violate their pact, rebel, refuse to pay the jizya (a poll tax imposed on non-

²² The reason why the commander-in-chief and the Crimean khan sought clarification stemmed from imperial orders emphasizing that the people of the region were not to be oppressed or mistreated, but rather protected from injustice (Kırca, 2007). Since the rebellion had not yet spread to Wallachia, the fatwa was issued specifically for the Moldavian rebels (Çalışkan, 2000).

Muslim male subjects), ally and unite with the infidel Russian forces, invade certain Muslim territories, and engage in combat against Muslims-would it be lawful to attack their lands, execute them, and enslave their women and children?

Answer:

It is lawful.

Following this fatwa, the Sultan issued an hatt-ı hümayûn (imperial decree) to the army, stating:

The requested fatwa for Moldavia has been delivered. Those who align themselves with the Russians shall be treated as Russians themselves (Çalışkan, 2000, p. 88).

As can be seen, the initial attempt was to persuade the rebels to abandon their stance by giving them advice. However, due to the ongoing rebellions and the difficulties experienced during the war, it was necessary to obtain such a fatwa by consulting the Sheikh al-Islam.

3.2. Russian Entry in Bucharest

After Iași, the Russians turned toward Bucharest. A portion of the Wallachian population still supported the Russians. The Ottoman administration, however, wanted to identify the rebels in Bucharest and stop the rebellion before it escalated. Wallachian prince Îskerletzâde Ligor attempted to identify the rebelling boyars, community leaders, and priests, while taking care not to harm those who remained uninvolved in the uprising (Köse, 2006).²³

Wallachian prince Gregor Gika was unpopular due to his oppression, leading to the formation of a strong pro-Russian faction among the population and the boyars. A force sent by Count Romanzov to conquer Wallachia attacked the city on the night of November 16, 1769. The voivode's guard mounted a feeble defense against this attack, and Colonel Karazin, supported by Moldavian and Albanian rebels as well as clergy, entered Bucharest on February 27, 1770 (Uzunçarşılı, 1988; Köse, 2006; Jorga, 2005). While fleeing, Gika was captured with his family and entourage and sent first to Iași and then to St. Petersburg. The occupation of Wallachia was completed a year later by the Russian army under the command of G.L. Stoffeln. The boyars and high-ranking clergy gathered in the Bucharest cathedral and swore allegiance to the Russian general. The declaration that Wallachia had passed under Russian rule was then announced. On April 8, 1770, a delegation of Wallachian boyars and clergy was received in the presence of the Empress. They were praised for their obedience, zeal, and loyalty. In this speech, the delegation members were also assured that they would receive the privileges they desired and that they would be protected under all circumstances (Zinkeisen, 2011).²⁴ During the Russian invasion of Bucharest, some boyars remained loyal to the Ottomans. These boyars were sent to Hungary with allowances provided by the Ottomans (BOA, TSMA.e, 520/4, BOA, TSMA.e, 519/10).²⁵

²³ The aim here was to protect the peasants who did not rebel and to control the events before they escalated (Köse, 2006).

²⁴ 20 Voivode Grigore Gika's Albanian Guard Corps commander was also pro-Russian (Zinkeisen, 2011).

²⁵ The boyars were reporting their circumstances to the grand vizier. There were also letters sent to the boyars from the center. In response to one such letter, the Wallachian boyars explained that before the Russians entered the town, they had sent the grain and lumber requested of them. Meanwhile, the Russians, with the cooperation of certain Wallachians, had entered the town, plundered even their clothing, and forced them to flee on foot and naked in the winter. Since they were in Hungarian territory, they had no knowledge of the conditions in Wallachia or the enemy's situation. The Russians were sending spies to capture the boyars there. The Russian commanders in Wallachia, on the other hand, wanted the boyars to submit to them. The Russians, hostile to the disobedient boyars, were making every effort to capture them. They stated that if they left Hungarian territory, they would fall into Russian hands and would not be able to escape (BOA, TSMA.e, 520/4); According to a message sent by Yanaki, one of the Bucharest boyars, the boyars who had fled to the Hungarian side were being duly protected and sheltered. The Hungarians had refused

When the Russians attacked Bucharest, the Wallachian commander, Aleppo Governor Vizier Mehmed Pasha, and the Wallachian prince resisted. Due to their limited numbers and assassinations carried out by townspeople, Mehmed Pasha took his retinue of soldiers and equipment and moved to Rușuk. The Wallachian prince also retreated to Karayova at this time. Mesut Giray, who had come for help, was unable to arrive in time, so he too moved to Rușuk (BOA, TSMA.e, 899/65). The people of Bucharest, supporting Russia, provided provisions for Russian troops, hosted them in their homes, and helped accommodate them (BOA, TSMA.e, 889/27). During this time, some priests and rebels aligned with the Russians traveled through Wallachian towns and villages, inciting the population against the Ottomans and negotiating with local leaders to secure their cooperation. To weaken the Ottoman position, insurgents attacked grain-laden boats, carts, officials, and major storehouses, attempting to disrupt supply lines. The seized provisions were then forwarded to Russian forces (Kırca, 2007). The town of Craiova in Wallachia became Russia's next target after Bucharest. Clergy and insurgents spreading Russian propaganda succeeded in swaying the local population, while the Wallachian prince Ligor also made an agreement with the Russians. Despite this, Manolaki, one of the Wallachian boyars in the town, remained loyal to the Ottomans and resisted both the Russians and the rebels with the support of his Albanian troops (Çalışkan, 2000; Kırca, 2007; BOA, TSMA.e, 788/90).²⁶

After capturing Bucharest, various intelligence reports began to surface regarding Russian military activities in the area. Russian outposts were established between Focșani and Bucharest. Due to an outbreak of disease in the city, Russian troops were encamped outside in temporary tents. According to information obtained from spies, trenches were dug along the roads near Bucharest's vineyards to defend against a potential attack from Yergöğü, and around forty cannons and a significant number of soldiers were stationed there. Approximately fifty thousand troops, including Wallachian rebels allied with the Russians, were reported to be present around Bucharest and Yergöğü. To reinforce the defense, a new Russian commander was appointed and set out from Iași toward Bucharest. Meanwhile, the city was experiencing plague and famine, causing food prices to rise; a loaf of bread was being sold for far more than its usual value (Aksan, 2010; BOA, TSMA.e, 696/49).²⁷

Local rebels in Bucharest and several Wallachian towns were actively working to incite other towns and villages to rise against the Ottomans. Some priests traveled to churches in nearby areas, provoking the local population against the Ottoman authorities and extracting oaths of allegiance. Donco, one of the Wallachian boyars, attempted to seize the Balovince area of Krayova with the support of Russian troops accompanying him. However, during a clash with the Ottoman forces stationed in the Krayova garrison, he was captured and killed (Çalışkan, 2000; Jorga, 2005).

To retake Bucharest, the Ottomans made new appointments, assigning the Governor of Aleppo, Vizier Mehmed Pasha, as the Serasker of Wallachia. As Ottoman forces approached Bucharest with greater strength, the Russians withdrew from the town and retreated to Iași. During this time,

the cannon orders requested by the Russians. They were abiding by the agreement made with the Ottomans. Meanwhile, it was also written that a war could break out between Russia and Austria on the Polish border (BOA, TSMA.e, 519/10).

²⁶ The document states that the boyar who provoked the people of Wallachia was appointed as the prince of Wallachia and that the people who provoked the people were the Greeks in Istanbul (BOA, TSMA.e., 788/90).

²⁷ The dire situation in Wallachia and Moldavia was described in Ahmed Resmi Efendi's notes and in a letter from Russian Commander Rumyantsev to the Tsarina: The constant flooding of the Danube, the resulting swamps caused by melting snow, and the intense insect infestation caused disease. Peasants fleeing the enemy and the plague abandoned their homes and fields (Aksan, 2010).

Manolaki, the boyar of Craiova, was tasked with defending Bucharest. He was also assigned the duty of pacifying the rebellious population. Having proven his loyalty through his resistance against the Russians, Manolaki Bey was appointed as the Voivode of Wallachia (Çalışkan, 2000; Jorga, 2005). The newly appointed Wallachian voivode, Manolaki, and the Wallachian commander, Mehmed Pasha, were tasked with defending Bucharest. After the battles of Kagul (Kartal) and Gölbaşı, Mehmed Pasha, anticipating a renewed Russian offensive against Bucharest, abandoned Bucharest with his forces and headed towards Silistre and Rusçuk (Çalışkan, 2000; Jorga, 2005). Wallachian prince Manolaki also abandoned Bucharest and retreated to Kraiovo. Upon hearing of Bucharest's abandonment, the Russians reentered Bucharest (Çalışkan, 2000; Jorga, 2005).

The lack of popular support and the inadequacy of the forces under the serasker and the prince significantly contributed to their withdrawal from the city. Following these rebellions, which weakened the Ottoman army militarily and gave the Russians an advantage, a fatwa previously issued for the Moldavian rebels was now extended to the Wallachian rebels. Questions to the Sheikh al-Islam:

Question:

According to the decree of His Majesty the Sultan:

If the non-Muslim population in the region of Wallachia breaks their agreement, refuses to pay the jizya, joins and acts in unison with our enemy Russia, and proceeds to invade certain areas and fight against the Muslims living there-Would it be religiously permissible to wage war against these rebels, to kill or capture them, and to confiscate their property? Please explain.

Answer:

It is permissible by the will of Allah

Secondly, in the fatwa issued for the Wallachian principality, it was ruled that the rebels were considered enemies because they had broken the agreement signed between the Ottoman Empire and the principalities.

Based on this fatwa, Sultan Mustafa (1757-1774) III sent two hatt-ı hümayûn to the commander-in-chief, confirming his approval for treating the rebellious Wallachian population as enemies.

“... Just as the people of Moldavia have submitted to the Muscovites, so too have the people of Wallachia shown rebellion and joined them, as has reached Our Imperial knowledge. Immediately, a request was made to our Sheikh al-Islam for a fatwa allowing action to be taken against them, including their killing, enslavement, and captivity. The sacred fatwa was obtained and promptly sent to your side. Based on the fatwa, My Imperial permission is granted. Therefore, decrees have been issued in all directions in accordance with this, and may Allah, the Almighty, grant victory and enable the punishment of the rebels. Amin” (Çalışkan, 2000, p. 125, 126).

The Ottoman Empire did not rely solely on punitive measures to suppress the rebellion in Wallachia and Moldavia; instead, it sought to prevent further unrest by pardoning those who abandoned the revolt. In an imperial order sent to Manolaki, who had been appointed as the Voivode of Wallachia, it was instructed that the boyars, priests, community leaders, close relatives, and prominent local figures should be advised to urge the people to remain loyal. Additionally, it

was declared that loyal subjects would be exempt from jizya and other taxes for a period of three years (Kırca, 2007; BOA, TSMA.e, 520/17).²⁸

After the fall of Khotyn Fortress and the defeat at Kagul, the Ottoman Empire sought to end the war. On May 30, 1772, a four-month truce was signed in Yergöğü through the mediation of Austrian and Prussian envoys. During this period, peace negotiations were held in Focșani, located on the Moldavian border. The Ottoman delegates rejected Russia's demands concerning Crimea and returned directly to Istanbul. Later, another round of peace talks was held in Bucharest, but no agreement was reached. Russian commander Rumyantsev congratulated Sultan Abdülhamid I (1774-1789) on his accession to the throne and also requested the conclusion of the Treaty of Bucharest (Genel Kurmay).²⁹ Since the Ottomans wanted to liberate Iași and Bucharest, which were under Russian occupation, they did not agree to the treaty. Due to the advance of the Russian army and the difficulties faced by both sides, peace negotiations were started in a place called Küçük Kaynarca, north of Silistre. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was signed between the two sides on July 17, 1774 (Köse, 2006; Köksal, 2011).³⁰

In the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, the Ottoman Empire accepted the condition of pardoning those who collaborated with the Russians to prevent further rebellion of the people. In fact, before this treaty, the state had already showed that it wanted to resolve the issue in a conciliatory way by announcing that the taxes of those who gave up rebellion would not be collected for three years (BOA, TSMA.e, 889/27, BOA, TSMA.e, 546/44).³¹

Following a long period of peace, the Ottoman Empire entered the war with Russia inadequately prepared. Russia's agreements with the princes of Moldavia and Wallachia, its encouragement of the boyars and local population to rebel, difficulties in supplying the army with provisions, and the disruption of logistical services severely weakened the Ottoman position, contributing significantly to the unfavorable outcome of the war. These uprisings, which began as a result of Peter the Great's policies in the early eighteenth century, continued into the nineteenth century. Notably, the revolts in Wallachia and Moldavia, which initially took the form of seeking Russian protection, later transformed into movements for independence not only against the Ottoman Empire, but also against Russian and Austrian domination (Karasu, 2002).

4. Conclusion

Historians of the Ottoman Empire, both Türk and foreign, have generally paid limited attention to the 1768–1774 Ottoman-Russian War. This period has often been portrayed merely as further evidence of the Empire's decline (Aksan, 1997). However, one of the key factors behind Russia's

²⁸ Despite the damage caused by the rebellions, the Ottoman Empire took protective measures against the people who did not participate in the rebellion. There was constant correspondence between the front and Istanbul on this issue. The Ottoman Empire asked the Sheikh-al-Islam about the matter and asked for a fatwa in order to make a fair decision (Kırca, 2007).

²⁹ With the defeat of Kagul (Kartal), the Ottoman fortresses of Bender, Ismail, Kili, Ibrail and Akkerman in Bucak fell into the hands of the Russians and Taurus was completely occupied by the Russians (Genel Kurmay, 1982).

³⁰ On November 28, 1771, during the Grand Vizierate of Muhsinzâse Mehmed Pasha, he participated in the peace negotiations with the Russian envoy Obreşkov in Yergöğü, Fokşani and Bucharest. The first meeting in Bucharest was held on November 9. Although the truce was extended until March 21, 1773, the agreement was not reached because of the desire for Crimean independence (Köksal, 2011).

³¹ The Ottoman Empire sent a message through the Crimean Khan Kaplan Giray to the boyars who rebelled during the war and switched to the Russian side to turn back from the rebellion and fight with the Ottoman army (BOA, TSMA.e, 546/44).

success in this war was its longstanding propaganda efforts, which began in the early eighteenth century and aimed to incite local populations against Ottoman authority and win their support.

From the early eighteenth century onwards, the strategic importance of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia became increasingly evident, particularly through the services rendered during the war and the military operations carried out in the region. After capturing the fortress of Khotyn at the outset of the conflict, the Russian forces advanced directly towards the town of Iași and subsequently turned toward Bucharest-moves that underscored the critical geographical position of these principalities.

During the war, a segment of the population-including local rulers, boyars, prominent community figures, and clergy-collaborated with the Russians and thus provided them with significant advantages. This internal support facilitated the Russian army's progress. Notably, the Moldavian prince Ligor adopted a pro-Russian stance at the beginning of the conflict, provided intelligence to the Russian forces, and was complicit in assassinations targeting the Ottoman military. These actions highlight the pivotal role that the leaders and people of Moldavia and Wallachia suffered considerably due to the hardships of war and were influenced by Russian anti-Ottoman propaganda. The Ottoman government's administrative weaknesses, the economic pressures caused by the frequent replacement of voivodes, excessive taxation, widespread epidemics, and the burden of supplying military needs all contributed to the spread of uprisings. In both principalities, the revolts became increasingly influential. The rebels disrupted grain shipments, failed to fulfill their obligations, and created severe supply shortages for the Ottoman army-factors that played a significant role in the military defeats suffered on the front.

The fact that the people were not initially interfered with despite the presence of rebels, and that repeated orders were sent to the commanders at the front to prevent any harm to the people of the region during the war shows the Ottoman sensitivity towards the people of the region. As the rebellions in Moldavia and Wallachia gradually spread and caused damage to the army, the Ottoman Empire did not break the line of justice, but as a result of the fatwa issued by the Sheikh al-Islam, it was decided that the rebellious people would also be fought as enemies.

The Wallachian and Moldavian principalities, where heated conflicts took place during the Russo-Türk War of 1768-1774, held strategically important positions. Therefore, while the Ottoman defeats on the front lines were not directly related to these rebellions, the information presented in this study suggests that the rebellions in Iași and Bucharest were a significant factor in the war's poor outcome.

Consequently, the rebellions in Wallachia and Moldavia were not merely regional disturbances but significant factors directly influencing the outcome of the war. The tangible impact of these uprisings was most acute in the logistical sphere. By systematically disrupting supply lines and halting the delivery of vital supplies, the rebels effectively strangled the Ottoman army's operational capacity. This orchestrated intervention led to critical food shortages, which in turn led to low morale, desertion, and a decline in combat effectiveness among Ottoman forces at the front. These internal instabilities, fueled by Russian propaganda and local grievances, played a decisive role in facilitating Russian military advances and significantly contributed to the Ottoman Empire's ultimate defeat.

As a result, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia occupied a strategic position in the Ottoman Empire's border defense, a position that was particularly evident in the wars against Russia and Austria in the eighteenth century.

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