

## 13 Friedrich von Gentz and His Wallachian Correspondents

Security Concerns in a Southeastern European Borderland (1812–28)

---

*Constantin Ardeleanu\**

When Russia declared war on the Sublime Porte in April 1828 and its armies swiftly occupied the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, the lucrative business of a certain epistolary soldier of fortune in Vienna came, from a historian's perspective, to a sad end. For more than fifteen years Friedrich von Gentz had been the incessant political correspondent of three successive hospodars in Bucharest, who rewarded his intelligence with Oriental magnanimity. After his latest sponsor's flight and the termination of his freelance geopolitical intelligence and consulting contract, Gentz informed his superior, the Austrian Chancellor Prince Metternich, that, in the absence of alternative financial means, he would have to retire from public service and lead a secluded and simple life, more appropriate to his limited resources.<sup>1</sup>

The chancellor sympathised with his associate's financial security dilemma, just as he had done in December 1812 when he originally introduced Gentz to the profitable Wallachian connection. This correspondence had provided Gentz with the best of two worlds. Not only did his generous clients in Bucharest pay top dollar for his political insight, but Gentz was gifted enough to encapsulate in his messages Austria's (and to his mind Europe's) vital interests in the Eastern Question, part of the nascent security culture that was being crafted at Vienna in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars.

The hospodars struck an equally advantageous deal. Gentz could justly boast that, as a historian paraphrased it, 'his regular reports [dispatched to Wallachia] contained more exact information than that received by any great power from its ambassador at Vienna'.<sup>2</sup> The princes enjoyed the services of

\* The research leading to these findings has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–2013) / ERC Grant Agreement n.615313.

<sup>1</sup> P.R. Sweet, *Friedrich von Gentz. Defender of the Old Order* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1935), 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

other well-paid confidential agents in Vienna, Paris or Istanbul, who kept them posted on the latest political news. Their association with one of Europe's best-informed statesmen, however, came to be treasured for something more than the mere content of his dispatches. A reliable source in Metternich's entourage was an asset that strengthened the hospodars' position at the Porte and could equally be employed as a backchannel to push Ottoman priorities onto Europe's political agenda.

For almost a century and a half, historians have used Gentz's reports to the Wallachian hospodars as a valuable source for early nineteenth-century European diplomatic history. Gentz's political writings, ideology and activities have also been thoroughly scrutinised, with the conclusion that his contribution to the conceptualisation and implementation of the post-1815 order is hard to refute.<sup>3</sup> However, his relations to the hospodars have not received much attention except in two minute, dated and little-known historical analyses.<sup>4</sup> The complex relationship between Gentz and his Wallachian correspondents is for several reasons worth exploring within the framework of Europe's post-1815 emerging security culture. Firstly, the diplomat was among the authors who conceptualised a new continental political order, and the princes were premium subscribers to his political philosophy. One of his most explicit pieces is a report sent to Bucharest in March 1818 in which he presented hospodar John George Caradja (1812–18) with a sketch of the security architecture drafted by Europe's Concert of Powers. Europe was

une grande famille politique, réunie sous les auspices d'un aréopage de sa propre création, dont les membres se garantissent à eux-mêmes, et garantissent à chacune des parties intéressées, la jouissance tranquille de leurs droits respectifs. [...] [I] serait, après tout, la meilleure des combinaisons possibles pour assurer la prospérité des peuples et le maintien de la paix qui en est une des premières conditions.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, as unofficial diplomatic agent, confidant and tutor, Gentz was engaged in a process which might be termed 'distance social teaching' in relation to his princely correspondents, 'intelligence brokers' in Europe's

<sup>3</sup> Some of the more recent approaches on Gentz's life and work are B. Dorn, 'Friedrich von Gentz und Europa. Studien zu Stabilität und Revolution 1802–1822', PhD diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn (1993); G. Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht. Friedrich Gentz als politischer Schriftsteller* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1994); H. Zimmermann, *Friedrich Gentz. Die Erfindung der Realpolitik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> I.C. Filitti, 'Corespondența domnilor și boierilor români cu Metternich și cu Gentz între anii 1812–1828', *Analele Academiei Române*, series II, 36 (1914); P. Sweet, 'Friedrich von Gentz and the Danubian Principalities. A sidelight on Austria's Eastern policy in the age of Metternich', offprint from *Birmingham Southern College Bulletin*, 26:6 (1935).

<sup>5</sup> A. Prokesch-Osten (ed.), *Dépêches inédites du Chevalier de Gentz aux Hospodars de Valachie pour servir à l'histoire de la politique européenne (1813 à 1828)*, vol.I (Paris: Plon, 1876), 354–6 (Gentz to Caradja, 24 March 1818).

southeastern periphery and equally interested in the collective security regime that was being implanted on the continent. Thirdly, in his Wallachian enterprise Gentz was more than a mere ideologue who preached the coming of a peaceful continental order. As Wallachia and Moldavia had become a lively scene of diplomatic dispute between Russia and the Sublime Porte, Gentz defended Austrian and European interests there in an attempt to curtail further escalations in this chapter of the Eastern Question. Hospodar Gregory Ghica (1822–8) often appealed to Gentz for expert guidance on his attitude in the diplomatic conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, a lesser-known episode in which ambassadorial conferences worked for the cooperative management and resolution of international crises.

The correspondence between Gentz and his addressees assumed further functions besides that of conveying political news from Vienna to Bucharest. In fact, it was not at all a unidirectional relationship in which one traded intelligence in exchange for generous stipends. The hospodars provided Gentz with valuable information on Southeastern European realities, which allowed the Viennese diplomat to better comprehend local political mentalities. In 1820, for example, he expressed his gratitude to Prince Alexander Soutzos (1818–21) for ‘la communication précieuse de V. A. que nous devons les premiers nouvelles exactes’<sup>6</sup> on Ali Pasha’s insurrection in the Balkans. Gregory Ghica kept Gentz regularly updated on the political situation of the Danubian principalities, supplementing the regular reports to Vienna by the Austrian consuls in Bucharest and Jassy.

Although the hospodar’s role could only be that of a ‘dumb character’ in the continental drama staged in an Ottoman–Russian–Austrian contact zone, in his epistolary relation to ‘his mentor’, Ghica revealed an insatiable thirst for understanding the construction and functional mechanisms of Europe’s political system. Explaining his interest in the situation of the Spanish colonies, the hospodar noted that ‘à présent que toutes les puissances de l’Europe forment pour ainsi dire, une famille inséparable, . . . aucune affaire ne peut être discutée en Europe sans attirer plus ou moins l’attention générale et la question des colonies espagnoles entre absolument dans cette catégorie’.<sup>7</sup> The letters of a hospodar who had had a very limited understanding of larger international politics increasingly displayed an articulated discourse of labelling and combating transnational threats that endangered tranquillity all over Europe, including in his small principality. As this chapter will show, the security culture (understood, in the vein of this volume, as the ‘sum of mutually shared

<sup>6</sup> Filitti, ‘Corespondența’, 977.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Ghica to Gentz, 17 March 1824’, in V. Georgescu, *Din corespondența diplomatică a Țării Românești (1823–1828)* (Bucharest: Muzeul Romîno-Rus, 1962), 124–6.

perceptions regarding enemies of the states, risks, vital interests and corresponding practices<sup>8</sup>) that emerged in Europe after 1815 gradually made its way to this Ottoman–Russian–Austrian contact zone, and the correspondence between Gentz and the Wallachian hospodars substantially contributed to this end. Looking at how Gentz’s intelligence and consulting services were used by his Wallachian contractors will throw more light on the diffusion to South-eastern Europe of modern ideas on, for instance, peace, stability, order, balance of power and security.

### The Communication Network

When John George Caradja was appointed prince of Wallachia in September 1812, amidst the tumult of Napoleon’s Russian campaign, he was well aware of his frail position. Geographically, Wallachia stood midway between the Porte, Russia and Austria, and the hospodar, like many of his predecessors, aimed to turn this dangerously exposed position into an asset. Bucharest had become a busy scene of contradictory rumours and unabated propaganda, and to secure his life and throne Caradja needed regular and reliable intelligence from all belligerent parties. At the end of a long war against Russia (1806–12), Caradja’s suzerain power the Porte also needed information from the empire’s northern regions, and the new hospodar knew that providing it was a proper way to prove his loyalty to the Sultan. In fact, by controlling information networks in Wallachia, Caradja aimed to preserve the influence he had enjoyed as a first dragoman of the Porte.<sup>9</sup> Such information was also crucial for his own material prosperity, to recover the huge amount invested at Istanbul for attaining the princely nomination (8,000 bags of gold or about 4 million piasters).<sup>10</sup>

In November 1812 the hospodar wrote to Metternich to announce his enthronement and to profess his willingness to contribute to a rapprochement between Austria and the Porte. He also requested and got the Austrian minister’s permission to keep an agent at Vienna, Constantin Ștefan Bellio (Belu), to look after his interests in the imperial capital.<sup>11</sup> Metternich also welcomed

<sup>8</sup> See also B.A. de Graaf, ‘Bringing sense and sensibility to the continent. Vienna 1815 revisited’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 13:4 (2015), 447–57.

<sup>9</sup> N.G. Alexandresco, *La correspondance du Chevalier Frédéric de Gentz avec le Prince de Valachie Jean Caradja et la question d’Orient* (Paris: Pedone, 1895), 11–3.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Andréossy to Duke of Bassano, 4 January 1813’, in A. Odobescu (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Urmare la colecțiunea lui Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki*, supplement V/2 (1781–1814) (Bucharest: Socec și Teclu, 1885), 739 (hereafter *Hurmuzaki*, V/2). Generally on bidding for the princely throne, K. Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774–1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 19–21.

<sup>11</sup> Filitti, ‘Corespondența’, 977–80; The letters are published in A. Oțetea (ed.), *Documente privind istoria României. Colecția Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki*, new series, vol.II: 1812–23 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1967), 64, 68–9 (hereafter *Hurmuzaki*, n.s., II).

the hospodar's desire to have a political correspondent in Vienna, which for Austria's Eastern policy provided an excellent occasion to establish a new line of communication, via Bucharest, with Istanbul. During an interview with Gentz on 27 December 1812, the minister approached his adviser on 'cette importante affaire'.<sup>12</sup> Gentz wrote to the hospodar later that night and offered his services as an independent correspondent who could 'fournir des notions correctes et satisfaisantes sur ce qui se passe chez nous et autour de nous, . . . uniquement par les rapports honorables, dans lesquels je me trouve avec les hommes les plus instruits de cette monarchie, et par la considération et confiance personnelle, qu'ils m'accordent'.<sup>13</sup>

The details of his contract were set up by Austria's consul to Bucharest, Fleischhackel von Hakenau, who introduced Gentz as 'one of the most famous political authors of our times' and praised his connections with Europe's political and intellectual elite.<sup>14</sup> The financial details were left to the patron's generosity.<sup>15</sup> The correspondence assumed, from the very beginning, a semi-official character, apparently enjoying the full backing of the Austrian foreign office.

Gentz worked hard to fulfil his obligations, and his diary shows him busy late at night preparing the reports.<sup>16</sup> The freelance diplomat was very well paid for his services. According to his account, he originally received 1,000 ducats a year from the Wallachian hospodar, but later his annual gratuities amounted to 4,000 ducats, forming a large part of his overall income.<sup>17</sup> In May 1819 Gentz described his work as involving two main dispatches per month, and 'si dans les intervalles il arrivait quelque nouvelle exigeant une prompt communication, je ne manquerai pas de la mander de suite, soit par la poste, soir, si le cas était urgent, par une estafette expédiée à mes frais'.<sup>18</sup> Gentz provided his sponsors with other commissions as well, such as sending them

<sup>12</sup> A. Sorel, 'Un confident du prince de Metternich, le chevalier de Gentz', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 18 (1876), 805–833, 808.

<sup>13</sup> 'Gentz to Caradja, 27 December 1812', in C. von Klinkowström (ed.), *Aus der alten Registratur der Staatskanzlei: Briefe politischen Inhalts von und an Friedrich von Gentz aus den Jahren 1799–1827* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1870), 110–2; Sorel, 'Un confident', 808–9. General details on this correspondence also in D. Hîncu, 'Gentz, corespondent al domnilor munteni', *Magazin istoric*, 1:3 (1967), 46–52, 46–8.

<sup>14</sup> 'Hakenau to Metternich, 20 January and 18 February 1813', *Hurmuzaki*, n.s., II, 81–2, 93–4.

<sup>15</sup> 'Gentz to Hakenau, 30 December 1812 and 2 February 1813', in Von Klinkowström (ed.), *Aus der alten Registratur*, 113–6.

<sup>16</sup> L. Assing (ed.), *Aus dem nachlass Varnhagen's von Ense. Tagebücher von Friedrich von Gentz* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1873), 1, 4, 13, 15ff.

<sup>17</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 4–5; *Ibid.*, *Gentz*, 176–7, 245, 249.

<sup>18</sup> 'Gentz to unknown, 5 May 1819', quoted in Filitti, 'Scrisori inedite ale cavalerului de Gentz', in Filitti, *Contribuții la istoria diplomatică a României în secolul al XIX-lea* (Bucharest: n.p., 1935), 4.

different products from the Viennese market<sup>19</sup> or lobbying for Wallachian entrepreneurs seeking influence in the Austrian capital. Such was the case with members of the Bellio and Sakelario families, who applied to become imperial barons.

Nicolas Rasty managed Gentz's communication with Wallachia from 1814 to 1820, and he was followed by Bellio and the Sakelarios.<sup>20</sup> Caradja's successor, Alexandros Soutzos, was aware of the correspondence and decided to continue it. In 1820, with his middlemen's support, Gentz also entered into an agreement with Moldavia's hospodar, Michael Soutzos<sup>21</sup> (Caradja's son-in-law and political rival), making double profit by selling the same intelligence to Bucharest and Jassy.

When in January 1821 Alexandros Soutzos died, Sakelario mediated an agreement with Scarlat Callimachi, Soutzos' replacement, but the new hospodar never made it to Bucharest due to the outbreak of the 1821 Wallachian and Greek insurrections. As Michael Soutzos of Moldavia also fled to Russia in March 1821, Gentz remained 'jobless'. However, his prestige among the political elite in the Danubian principalities made several princely pretenders seek his intelligence and consulting services, and he unsuccessfully lobbied on their behalf at Istanbul.<sup>22</sup>

Gregory Ghica, a conservative boyar, was the Sultan's choice for Wallachia's throne. Ghica got to Bucharest in September 1822, and Bellio advertised to him the advantages of having a certain private diplomatic adviser in Vienna. The hospodar invited Gentz to update him with intelligence and analysis on European political developments, which the freelance expert happily accepted.<sup>23</sup> It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship between the two statesmen, and their correspondence continued until the outbreak of the Russian–Ottoman war in April 1828. The communication network remained about the same, with consul Hakenau in Bucharest, and Bellio and the Sakelarios travelling between Vienna and Bucharest in connection with their economic ventures.<sup>24</sup>

Gentz institutionalised his relation with the Wallachian hospodars and integrated the vital interests of his contractors into the larger Austrian and

<sup>19</sup> 'Gentz to Soutzos, 18 March 1820', in A. Pippidi, 'Nicolas Soutzo (1798–1871) et la faillite du régime phanariote dans les Principautés roumaines', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 6:2 (1968), 313–38, 320.

<sup>20</sup> 'Hakenau to Metternich, 20 January 1820', in *Hurmuzaki*, n.s., II:228, 568–9; Filitti, 'Core-spondența', 984–5, 990.

<sup>21</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 8. <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–11.

<sup>23</sup> L. Assing (ed.), *Aus dem nachlass Varnhagen's von Ense*, vol.III (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1874), 110.

<sup>24</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 10.

Western European strategy of preventing war between Russia and the Porte. From reasons both private and of state, the hospodars were interested in maintaining order and tranquillity in the principalities, although their means to impose them were rather limited. Wallachia and Moldavia were vassal states of the Porte, but enjoyed a large degree of internal autonomy. Muslims were not allowed to settle in the principalities proper; however, Ottoman soldiers were stationed in several strongholds along the Danube (having a different juridical status), and were responsible for the principalities' security. The princes were veritable Oriental despots in their own countries, but they completely lacked diplomatic and military agency, reserved to their suzerain. Since the late eighteenth century Russia had the right to intervene on behalf of the Porte's Christian subjects, and the Russian consuls to Bucharest and Jassy became extremely influential in domestic politics as well. The hospodars tried to establish a functional 'balance of subjection' between the Porte and Russia, thus having multiple and often conflicting agendas. The official one was set from Istanbul, but the real(ist) one was dictated by their sincere faith that Russia would eventually be the saviour of the Balkan peoples. As most of the hospodars came, until 1821, from among the wealthy Hellenised families residing in the Phanar district of Istanbul, Greek national aspirations strengthened their secret loyalty. The hospodars usually seized the day and made those decisions that maximised the material benefits of their short princely terms (seven years, according to the 1802 Russian–Ottoman agreement).

### **Conflict Monitoring, Threat Perception and Diplomatic Mediation in Caradja's Reign**

It was in the midst of Napoleon's Russian campaign when Caradja came up with the idea of acquiring a political correspondent, and he most probably aimed at getting news related to the rapidly changing odds of the European war. Controlling an alternative intelligence network to that going directly from Vienna to Istanbul and acting as an information gatherer in an advanced Ottoman post on Russia's border was definitely worth investing in.<sup>25</sup> The importance of such up-to-the-minute military and political intelligence is clear when following Caradja's relations with the foreign consuls accredited to Bucharest, with the prince well aware that the victors' influence at Istanbul might eventually decide his fate. If in early 1813 Ledoulx, the French consul,

<sup>25</sup> For a modern approach, see Ş. Costache, 'At the end of empire: imperial governance, inter-imperial rivalry and "autonomy" in Wallachia and Moldavia, 1780s–1850s', PhD diss., University of Illinois (2013), 72–115.

reported that Caradja played the card of impartiality,<sup>26</sup> a couple of months later the hospodar seemed impressed by the alliance between Russia and Austria (March 1813) and the advance of the Russian armies towards Western Europe. Ledoulx blamed Caradja's 'correspondants mal intentionnés',<sup>27</sup> who were swiftly contradicted by the French successes at Lützen and Bautzen in May 1813. The prince 'semblait n'être plus le même homme' and confessed to the Frenchman 'qu'il respirait enfin'.<sup>28</sup> Caradja spread the good news to Istanbul,<sup>29</sup> but before long things changed once again, as the prince was promptly informed about Austria's declaration of war in August 1813, the foundation of the Triple Alliance in September, the fall of Leipzig and the Russian entry into Amsterdam.<sup>30</sup> By 1814 Caradja was in open conflict with Ledoulx, whose dismissal from Bucharest was requested of the consul's superiors in Istanbul, Vienna and Paris, a satisfaction finally granted by Talleyrand after Napoleon's fall.<sup>31</sup>

Insight into continental developments was crucial for Caradja not only for such exercises in political dissimulation. It was part of the hospodars' duty to provide the Porte with intelligence, and their entire career depended on the quality and timeliness of their reports. The French ambassador to Istanbul considered the two hospodars as 'les deux yeux du Gouvernement ottoman',<sup>32</sup> a proper depiction of their function on the Empire's northern periphery.

Gentz was part of a larger network of informants who provided Caradja with detailed reports on European politics throughout 1813. However, many of his letters were filled with references to Austria's role in a peaceful Europe envisioned by Metternich and his ideological friends. In his very first report, from February 1813, Gentz advertised the role of the Viennese court in clear terms: 'C'est elle [l'Autriche] qui, par sa position centrale, par son ancienne réputation, par ses rapports d'intérêt réciproque, de bienveillance et d'amitié commune avec les Puissances les plus divisées entre elles, paraît être spécialement appelée au rôle honorable de pacificateur général.'<sup>33</sup> The hospodar was

<sup>26</sup> 'Ledoulx to Maret, 29 January 1813', in N. Hodoş (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor, culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki*, vol. XVI, *Correspondență diplomatică și rapoarte diplomatice franceze, 1603–1824* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1912), 956 (hereafter *Hurmuzaki*, XVI); V.A. Urechia, 'Din domnia lui I. Caragea. Avenire la tron. Mișcări contra grecilor. Finanțe, 1812–1818', *Analele Academiei Române*, series II:22 (1900), 141–300, 144.

<sup>27</sup> 'Ledoulx to Maret, 3 and 17 April 1813', in *Hurmuzaki*, XVI, 961, 963; Urechia, 'Din domnia', 180.

<sup>28</sup> 'Ledoulx to Maret, 22 May 1813', in *Hurmuzaki*, XVI, 966.

<sup>29</sup> 'Caradja to Maret, 26 June 1813', in *ibid.*, 970.

<sup>30</sup> Urechia, 'Din domnia', 183. Comments of the Austrian consul in 'Hakenau to Metternich, 21 August 1813', in *Hurmuzaki*, n.s., II, 119–20.

<sup>31</sup> 'Caradja to Talleyrand, 7 July 1814', in *Hurmuzaki*, XVI, 970; Urechia, 'Din domnia', 191.

<sup>32</sup> 'Andréossy to the French Foreign Minister, 7 August 1813', in *Hurmuzaki*, I/2, 749.

<sup>33</sup> 'Gentz to Caradja, 2 February 1813', in Prokesch-Osten (ed.), *Dépêches inédites*, I, 6–9; similar remarks in other letters: 54–6 (5 February 1814); 118–22 (7 November 1814); and 195–214 (1 January 1816). A thorough analysis in Alexandresco, *La correspondance*, 21–41.



versed enough in international politics to know that in such fluid times Austria was a power worth befriending, especially as Metternich seemed sincere in his overtures to support Ottoman interests.

In 1814 and 1815, Caradja served as a backchannel for the Austrians to persuade the Porte to defend its interests and territorial integrity. Gentz wrote often to Bucharest to convince Caradja that Sultan Mahmud II should seek proper guarantees for its possessions,<sup>34</sup> an effective means to check Russia's growing influence in the Danubian area and to secure Europe's balance of power. Metternich insisted on this point in another letter from Gentz in November 1814. But when Caradja, with or without permission from Istanbul, replied that the Porte wanted to question the loss of Eastern Moldavia through the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest, his request was seen at Vienna as unreasonable, due to Tsar Alexander's apparent hostility to reopening this question.<sup>35</sup>

Gentz continued his game of persuasion, and Caradja paid on for his thorough accounts. To prove his usefulness, the Viennese diplomat provided his sponsor with confidential and exclusive information, such as details on the Holy Alliance and an elaborate narrative portraying it as indirectly favourable to the Porte (since the Christian monarchs swore to protect peace on the continent).<sup>36</sup> But by 1816 Caradja was convinced, like most representatives of the political elite in the Danubian principalities, that Russia was the real victor of the Vienna Congress and that a new Russian–Ottoman conflict had become inevitable. All its provisions looked too idealistic to be believed in an Ottoman–Russian–Austrian borderland, with a Russian army mobilised in Eastern Moldavia (Bessarabia), a province annexed by Russia four years earlier.

From 1816 Caradja started to prepare his retreat, and Austria and Russia seemed the best destinations to escape the Sultan's retribution. According to the 1802 Russian–Ottoman convention, hospodars were appointed for a term of seven years, and they could only be discharged with clear proof of misconduct. However, in 1815, after three years in office, the Porte would have liked the prince to step down, as a sign of loyalty. Unwilling to leave Wallachia yet and enjoying the support of Russia's ambassador to Istanbul, Caradja kept his throne but knew he had to leave before the end of his term.<sup>37</sup>

In 1816 Tsar Alexander appointed Count Stroganov as his new diplomatic representative to the Porte, and the latter pursued a more determined policy of defending Russia's interests in the Near East. Stroganov insisted on complete fulfilment of the Treaty of Bucharest, and the rights of the Danubian

<sup>34</sup> 'Gentz to Caradja, 28 September 1814', in Prokesch-Osten (ed.), *Dépêches inédites*, 104–5.

<sup>35</sup> 'Gentz to Caradja, 7 November 1814', in *ibid.*, 118–22. <sup>36</sup> Urechia, 'Din domnia', 204–6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 200–1.

principalities featured prominently on the Russian–Ottoman agenda.<sup>38</sup> Rumours of a Russian invasion were rife, and Sultan Mahmud instructed Caradja to assist with reinforcing and provisioning the Danubian fortresses, a task that proved extremely expensive and unpleasant for the taxpayers.<sup>39</sup>

Caradja fulfilled all his vassal obligations, but the redirection of his allegiance was clear. Since 1816 the hospodar initiated a secret correspondence with top Russian statesmen, to whom he disclosed his true feelings. When Gentz apprised him that the Austrian Embassy to St Petersburg had information on his Russian connection, Caradja replied indignantly (13 August 1816), but at the same time wrote to Russia's foreign minister Count Kapodistrias about this life-threatening leak.<sup>40</sup> Caradja forwarded the Russian statesmen the reports of his Viennese correspondent, which apparently, according to a letter of December 1817, impressed Kapodistrias.<sup>41</sup> Since the autumn of 1816 Caradja was in even closer contact with Stroganov, to whom he sent information not only on Ottoman abuses in Wallachia, but also on political intrigues in Istanbul.<sup>42</sup>

Caradja's connection with Gentz, although both parties vouched for its complete privacy, was well-known in European political circles. Leopold von Schladen, the Prussian ambassador to Istanbul, noted that 'La Porte est mieux instruite qu'on ne le suppose, de tout ce qui a trait aux affaires de l'Europe et je croirais assez volontiers que ses informations viennent, par l'entremise des hospodars, de la part du chevalier de Gentz, qui fournissait des bulletins du plus grand intérêt au prince Caradja et qui vient d'entrer en relations avec son successeur.'<sup>43</sup> A British physician who visited the princely court in January 1818 also noted the correspondence, 'the immediate transmission of which to Constantinople, was of no small importance to the Hospodar, in strengthening his interest with the ministers of the Grand Seignior'.<sup>44</sup>

By making liberal use of Gentz's letters, Caradja spread to Istanbul useful ideas about Russia's avowed pacifism and to St Petersburg details on Austria's

<sup>38</sup> Details in G. Yakschith, 'La Russie et la Porte ottomane de 1812 à 1826', *Revue historique*, 91 (1906), 283–310; M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 59.

<sup>39</sup> Urechia, 'Din domnia', 203.

<sup>40</sup> P.A. Argyropoulo, 'Une correspondance diplomatique, 1816–1818', offprint from *Les Balkans* (Athens: Éditions Flamma, 1937), 16–9.

<sup>41</sup> C.J. Caradja, 'Corespondența lui Capodistria cu Ioan Caragea Voevod', *Revista Istorică*, 7:7–9 (1921), 181–189, 187.

<sup>42</sup> Argyropoulo, 'Une correspondance', 9; The entire correspondence was published in P.A. Argyropoulo, *Correspondance diplomatique de l'hospodar de Valachie J. Caradja avec le baron de Stroganof* (Athens: n.p., 1954).

<sup>43</sup> 'Schladen to Friedrich Willhelm III, 25 January 1819', in N. Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria Românilor*, vol.II (Bucharest: Impr. Statului, 1896), 550.

<sup>44</sup> W. Macmichael, *Journey from Moscow to Constantinople in the Years 1817–1818* (London: John Murray, 1819), 114.

commitment to defend Ottoman interests as a way of contributing to Europe's stability and peace. Caradja's calculated indiscretions proved useful in the negotiations that Stroganov and the reis effendi started in 1816, making all parties more disposed to bargain.

Strongly criticised by the local aristocracy who sought for support equally in the Ottoman Empire and in Russia or Austria, Caradja took time to prepare his retreat.<sup>45</sup> Metternich and Gentz promised him safe passage through Austrian territory,<sup>46</sup> and Kapodistrias guaranteed that he would be allowed to settle in Russia. On 11 October 1818 Caradja fled to Austrian Transylvania.<sup>47</sup> A new diplomatic conflict ensued at Istanbul, as Stroganov intended to use Caradja's case to force a change in the Ottoman leadership, whereas the reis effendi insisted on Russia's involvement in the hospodar's treason. By fleeing to neutral Austria, Caradja aimed first and foremost to protect his fortune, safely deposited in Austrian and Swiss banks.<sup>48</sup>

### The Wallachian Hospodars and the Russian–Ottoman Diplomatic Dispute

Caradja's successor, Alexandros Soutzos, continued to correspond with Gentz, who updated him on political realities in Europe and on the Russian–Ottoman negotiations in Istanbul. The Viennese diplomat seemed convinced that the question of the Danubian principalities was only an 'hors-d'œuvre, adroitement mis en avant pour compliquer la discussion'; the only serious issue was Russia's acquisitions on the Asian coast during the previous war, which were supposed to be returned to the Porte. Although justice stood with the Ottoman cause, Gentz advised 'moderation, resignation, condescendence' and a necessary sacrifice for Europe's peace.<sup>49</sup> He seemed equally convinced that, with Tsar Alexander committed to the common cause, there was no danger of an imminent war 'si elle n'est amenée par d'autres incidents imprévus, ou par des fautes graves, heureusement peu vraisemblables, du Gouvernement turc lui-même'.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> V. Georgescu, *Mémoires et projets de réforme dans les Principautés Roumaines. 1769–1830* (Bucharest: Association internationale d'études du Sud-Est européen, 1970), 47–93.

<sup>46</sup> The entire correspondence between Caradja, Gentz and Metternich is published in Von Klinikowström (ed.), *Aus der alten Registratur*, 118–48.

<sup>47</sup> Filitti, 'Correspondența', 987. 'Appendix, Hakenau to Metternich, 11 October 1818', in *Hurmuzaki*, n.s., II, 482–4.

<sup>48</sup> A. Oțetea, 'Fuga lui Caragea', in *Omagiu lui P. Constantinescu-Iași: cu prilejul împlinirii a 70 de ani* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1965), 386. On his exile, see A. Pippidi, 'Jean Caradja et ses amis de Genève', reprinted in A. Pippidi, *Hommes et idées du sud-est européen à l'aube de l'âge moderne* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1980), 295–314; 'Notules phanariotes, II, Encore Jean Caradja à Genève', *Ho Eranistes*, 17 (1981), 74–85.

<sup>49</sup> 'Gentz to Al. Soutzos, 2 May 1820', in Prokesch-Osten (ed.), *Dépêches inédites*, II, 23–5.

<sup>50</sup> 'Ibid., 2 June 1820', in *ibid.*, 32–53.

Such an unforeseen incident came sooner than expected with the outbreak of the Wallachian and Greek insurrections in the Danubian principalities in January and February 1821, shortly after Soutzos' unexpected death. In a public statement, Alexander Ypsilanti, the leader of the Greek movement, boasted that a 'great army' would follow on his footsteps, and this was widely considered as the beginning of a new Russian–Ottoman war. Tsar Alexander was at the Congress of Laibach (Ljubljana), occupied with containing the revolution in the Italian peninsula, being thus caught between his sympathy for the Greek cause and the pledges made for securing order on the continent. In March 1821, the Tsar and his ministers repudiated the Greek insurrection and condemned Ypsilanti, 'who misleads his compatriots and brings them to inevitable misfortunes'.<sup>51</sup> Ottoman troops intervened to pacify the principalities, but their abusive and excessive conduct added to Russia's complaints and resulted in the breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Porte in August 1821, which left the other ambassadors in Istanbul to mediate.

Lord Strangford, the British ambassador to Istanbul and main negotiator with the Porte, used his own unconventional means to pull the strings in Istanbul, then visited Bucharest in September 1822 and headed to Verona for the next Congress, where he met Gentz. The latter was also greatly involved in trying to cope with Russia's demands and return the principalities to their pre-1821 status, and provided valuable insight to the British envoy from his deep knowledge of Danubian realities. As Strangford noted, his correspondence with Gentz 'originally began on subjects purely literary, but in the course of these he [Gentz] had often unreservedly expressed his sentiments to me in respect to political transactions growing out of events in the Principalities'.<sup>52</sup>

Negotiations in the ambassadorial conferences were fruitful, and the Porte accepted the appointment of new hospodars. As the Greeks were compromised by their ongoing insurrection, the Sultan and his advisers agreed in 1822 to nominate native boyars to the principalities' thrones – Gregory Ghica in Wallachia and Ioniță Sandu Sturdza in Moldavia.

A conservative boyar with little formal education, Ghica was barely qualified to govern in a buffer state on the Russian–Ottoman border. In a letter to Gentz he acknowledged that it was always difficult to serve as prince of Wallachia, but '[cette position] est effrayante dans les circonstances du moment, surtout pour un homme qui, d'une vie tranquille et bornée, se trouve tout d'un coup transplanté au milieu des événements les plus extraordinaires'.<sup>53</sup> Gentz's

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in B. Jelavich, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State, 1821–1878* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24.

<sup>52</sup> R.R.N. Florescu, 'Lord Strangford and the problem of the Danubian principalities, 1821–4', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 39:93 (1961), 472–488, 476, fn.19.

<sup>53</sup> Ghica to Gentz, 15 August–4 September 1823, in Georgescu, *Correspondența*, 82.

geopolitical intelligence and consulting services were consequently a real boon for the inexperienced hospodar, who also relied heavily on Consul Hakenau's support.<sup>54</sup> Later, the prince seems to have also paid Baron Ottenfels, the Austrian internuncio, to provide him with information from Istanbul, a connection mediated by Gentz.<sup>55</sup> Ghica considered Gentz his political 'mentor', and the hospodar's letters are filled with flatteries for 'le seul astre dont la lumière est en état de me tirer avec confiance du labyrinthe inextricable des affaires en question'.<sup>56</sup> Ghica accepted the Austrian tutelage, but aimed to keep it as confidential as possible. In March 1826, for example, he asked Gentz and Ottenfels 'de ne pas montrer à la Porte trop d'affection pour moi, car je peux être fortement compromis par là'.<sup>57</sup>

During the period 1822–6 the Danubian principalities remained an important issue in Russian–Ottoman relations, with Austrian and British diplomats involved in mediating a compromise. The main issue was the maintenance of Ottoman troops in Wallachia and Moldavia, stationed there since 1821. The armies were withdrawn through international arbitration, but when the new hospodars came from Istanbul they were accompanied by a large number of Ottoman 'beshlis' (2,000 soldiers in Wallachia, 1,000 in Moldavia), responsible for securing domestic tranquillity. Russia argued that such a military force was no longer needed, and that its presence prolonged the uncertainty preventing exiled boyars from returning home. Ghica had an ambivalent attitude towards these military corps. He wrote to Gentz that they were a foreign army with negative effects on the country's administration and budget, and accepted his correspondent's opinion that it was necessary to require only a partial evacuation of the Ottoman troops.<sup>58</sup> But in January 1824 he told Russian envoy Matei Minciaki his 'honest' opinion, 'qu'en laissant ici une garde turque, la Porte n'a eu pour but que le bien-être du pays'.<sup>59</sup>

In October 1823 the two Christian emperors met at Czernowitz in Austrian Bukovina. Ghica was afraid to send an envoy to the conference, but asked Gentz to lobby for him, 'car il est toujours bon pour un Prince Régnant de

<sup>54</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 10.

<sup>55</sup> 'Kreuchely to Miltitz, 27 October 1824', in N. Iorga (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki*, vol.X, 1763–1844 (Bucharest: Stabilimentul Grafic I.V. Socecu, 1897), 302 (hereafter *Hurmuzaki*, X); 'Gentz to Ottenfels, 21 April 1826', in *Gentz Digital. Digitale Erschliessung der Korrespondenzen des Friedrich von Gentz (1764–1832)*, <http://gentz-digital.ub.uni-koeln.de/> (accessed 18 July 2016).

<sup>56</sup> 'Ghica to Gentz, 18–20 June 1823', in Georgescu, *Corespondența*, 78–80.

<sup>57</sup> 'Ibid., 31 January and 7 March 1826', in *ibid.*, 199, 202–4.

<sup>58</sup> 'Ibid., 18 October 1823', in *ibid.*, 89–90. See also B. Lungu, *Les grandes puissances et les Principautés Roumaines, de 1821 à 1826* (Paris: École Roumaines en France, 1935); M. Šedivý, *Metternich, the Great Powers and the Eastern Question* (Pilsen: University of West Bohemia, 2013), 95–105.

<sup>59</sup> 'Ghica to Gentz, 20 November 1823 and 4 January 1824', in Georgescu, *Corespondența*, 95, 108–9.

Valachie, quand il est bien vu de la Russie'.<sup>60</sup> Metternich and Russian Foreign Minister Count Nesselrode discussed the issue in Lemberg (L'viv), with the Austrians fully determined to mediate the restoration of diplomatic relations between Russia and the Porte. Ghica sincerely wished for peace between his two masters, as advised by Gentz. In Istanbul Strangford convinced the reis effendi to accept a reduction of the number of 'beshlis' in Wallachia and Moldavia, and the hospodars sent written assurances that they could secure domestic tranquillity.<sup>61</sup> Ghica wrote to Gentz, proud of his actions that 'contribuera beaucoup à aplanir les obstacles d'une négociation à laquelle toutes les puissances de l'Europe s'intéressent vivement'.<sup>62</sup> Needless to say that Gentz was busy, through his epistolary connections with Ghica and the internuncio, reinforcing the pacific messages to the Porte.

Domestic security in Wallachia and Moldavia was crucial for preventing a Russo-Ottoman war, as the hospodars' inability to cope with local disorders could have provided a pretext for Russian military intervention. Ghica learnt that it was vital for him to have European interests well implanted into the principalities as a way of containing both Ottoman and Russian excesses in his buffer state: 'l'influence russe nous est nécessaire pour contrebalancer d'une bonne manière les prétentions exorbitantes des autres, mais cette influence n'en devient pas moins onéreuse, quand elle dépasse ses bornes légitimes et raisonnables'.<sup>63</sup> Austria seemed the power to do this. No wonder that Gentz treasured him and considered him the best Wallachian ruler for his balanced attitude between Russia and the Porte.<sup>64</sup> Yet perhaps a better reason was that mentioned in another letter to the internuncio where Gentz noted that he had carefully cultivated this relationship for its financial and political benefits.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout his reign, Ghica kept updating the Porte and the Ottoman pashas of the Danubian strongholds with intelligence from his sources. Gentz also sent him information to forward to Istanbul, referring especially to 'les intentions pacifiques des cours alliées'.<sup>66</sup> The hospodar tried to assure his Viennese correspondent that the Porte had no clear details about his foreign source, but this did not fool anyone given the content of the diplomat's dispatches and their philo-Austrian tone.<sup>67</sup> However, as mentioned in Caradja's case, such transparency on the peaceful intentions of the European courts

<sup>60</sup> 'Ibid., 19 September 1823', in *ibid.*, 86–7. <sup>61</sup> Florescu, 'Lord Strangford', 485–6.

<sup>62</sup> 'Ghica to Gentz, 18 June 1824', in Georgescu, *Corespondența*, 145–7.

<sup>63</sup> 'Ibid., 15 October 1824', in *ibid.*, 154.

<sup>64</sup> 'Gentz to Ottenfels, 30 October 1826', in A. von Prokesch-Osten, *Zur Geschichte der orientalischen Frage: Briefe aus dem nachlasse Friedrichs von Gentz, 1823–1829* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1877), 156.

<sup>65</sup> 'Ibid., 29 October–2 November 1825', in *Gentz Digital*.

<sup>66</sup> 'Ghica to Gentz, 4 September 1823 and 4 January 1824', in Georgescu, *Corespondența*, 81–3, 110.

<sup>67</sup> 'Ibid., 7 March 1826', in *ibid.*, 202–4.

contributed to the collective effort of convincing the Porte that it was a favourable time for bargaining. When Ottenfels wrote Gentz that Strangford knew about his reports to Ghica, the freelance diplomat replied that he and the British ambassador had discussed this communication channel before, which was also well known to the Russians, and such openness was definitely useful for helping the negotiations to a positive result.<sup>68</sup>

Everything changed with Tsar Alexander's death in 1825, which occupied many letters between the two. With Nicholas' coming things moved swiftly in Russian–Ottoman relations, with a Russian ultimatum regarding the principalities already in May 1826. The Porte initially yielded and, after renewed negotiations, the Convention of Akkerman was signed on 7 October 1826, reconfirming Russia as protector of the Christians from the Ottoman Empire. A political crisis in Istanbul and Mahmud's repudiation of the Convention, however, led Russia to declare war on 26 April 1828. It was no surprise to anyone in Europe, and Ghica had long prepared his withdrawal. Minciaki's arrival at Bucharest as Russia's consul general in 1826 shifted Ghica's allegiance, though the prince tried to preserve his good relations with Hakenau and continued to pay Gentz for his precious political insight. In January 1828 Ghica wrote to Gentz still hoping that a 'just and peaceful' spirit would watch over the mediation between Russia and its allies,<sup>69</sup> but Gentz was less idealistic and finally advised the hospodar to quit his post when war became imminent.<sup>70</sup>

Ghica took a special interest in international politics and in the European powers' attempts to contain the spread of instability and disorder on the continent and beyond.<sup>71</sup> The Spanish question and the Greek war occupied much of the correspondence between Gentz and the hospodar, and Ghica wished for a peaceful settlement of the conflicts under the mediation of the European Concert. He often referred to 'l'esprit pacifique qui a dirigé toujours ces souverains quand il se sont trouvés ensemble'.<sup>72</sup> Ghica was equally interested in the policy of collective intervention, and believed that 'une puissance ne peut intervenir dans les affaires d'une autre puissance que lorsque elle en est expressément invitée', with the exception of the case when 'la puissance qui doit être secourue, n'a pas assez de liberté pour faire une telle démarche'.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> 'Gentz to Ottenfels, 17 May 1823', in *Gentz Digital*.

<sup>69</sup> 'Ghica to Gentz, 21 January 1828', in Georgescu, *Correspondența*, 248–9.

<sup>70</sup> Prokesch-Osten (ed.), *Dépêches inédites*, III, 467 (editor's note).

<sup>71</sup> He subscribed to some of the major European journals: *Le Constitutionnel*, *L'Etoile*, *Gazette Universelle*, *Journal des Débats*, *Journal de St Pétersbourg*, *L'Observateur Autrichien*. See C.I. Scafeș and V.E. Zodian, *Grigore al IV-lea Ghica (1822–1828)* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1986), 94.

<sup>72</sup> 'Ghica to Gentz, 19 September 1823', in Georgescu, *Correspondența*, 85–7.

<sup>73</sup> 'Ibid., 19 February 1824', in *ibid.*, 118–9.



The hospodar was similarly very critical of the British tendency to act in isolation of the European Concert.<sup>74</sup>

### **Gentz and an Alternative View on Southeastern European Stability**

One of the persons familiar with Gentz's correspondence with the Wallachian hospodars was Constantin Samurçaş, a Greek entrepreneur who sought his fortune in Wallachia in the late eighteenth century. During the next couple of decades, Samurçaş climbed the social ladder and became an influential dignitary during all regimes. In 1821 he took possession of Gentz's letters and handed them over to the Russian consul. Samurçaş was involved in the insurrections of 1821, and felt threatened when they ended in total anarchy and Ottoman troops entered the country. Samurçaş fled to the Transylvanian town of Kronstadt (Braşov), together with a large group of Wallachian boyars who feared Ottoman retribution.<sup>75</sup>

In 1822 Samurçaş attempted, through Sakelario's mediation, to enter into direct contact with Gentz. He supplied the Viennese diplomat with an autobiographical sketch, and later his associate Mavros got to Vienna and tried to convince him to accept such a contract. But Gentz refused when he got details on the pretenders' former political activities. Samurçaş wrote again in September 1822,<sup>76</sup> and the correspondence was established a year later, when Gentz updated Samurçaş on current international negotiations, which hopefully would allow the latter's return to Wallachia. Samurçaş replied with his own interpretation of political events and with political news from the Ottoman Empire. In November 1823 Samurçaş drafted a memorandum entitled 'Considérations sur une intervention de la Russie dans l'affaire des Grecs'. His main argument, based on Gentz's own conception of the balance of power, was that European powers should use the Greek revolt as a means to replace the Ottoman Empire with a new and more effective counterweight. A weak Porte constantly endangered the balance, and it was crucial for the Habsburgs to intervene and prevent the possibility that a Greek secession would serve Russia's interests exclusively.<sup>77</sup>

Gentz responded in December 1823 with his own memo in which he defended his legalist approach, arguing that the Greek insurrection was similar

<sup>74</sup> 'Ibid., 19 March 1826', in *ibid.*, 204–5.

<sup>75</sup> For his spectacular career, see Costache, 'At the End of Empire', 77–101.

<sup>76</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 12–3; Costache, 'At the End of Empire', 101–2. A letter of Samurçaş, dated October 1822, is presented in D. Hîncu, 'Documente inedite din arhivele vieneze. Intrigi şi intriganţi de la începutul veacului trecut', *Magazin istoric*, new series, 28:10 (1994), 44–5.

<sup>77</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 12–3; Costache, 'At the End of Empire', 105–6.



to any other revolt against legitimate authority. Samurcaş replied with another long text, and their debate continued in 1824 with Gentz supporting the Porte, and Samurcaş defending the Greek rebels. Samurcaş's expose made Gentz exclaim that they shared completely opposite political views: 'Ma politique est plus étroitement liée aux pouvoirs légalement établis, et à la stabilité, et la votre plus favorable à la liberté et aux changemens [sic].'<sup>78</sup> Despite their divergent approaches, the two ultimately pursued the same goal: stability in Europe. Samurcaş was not a revolutionary, but he had a good point that a tottering Ottoman Empire would continue to threaten the international balance and the vital interests of all European powers. He backed the creation of a Greek state placed under Ottoman suzerainty and European protection, which was hardly acceptable at the time for the parties involved in the military and diplomatic conflict.<sup>79</sup> The correspondence touched on other contemporary political issues in Europe, and Gentz, who really came to appreciate his new interlocutor, intervened to Istanbul, trying to facilitate his safe return to Bucharest, where Samurcaş could better look after his troubled health.<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusions

The relationship between Gentz and his Wallachian correspondents provides a good example of a practice that disseminated to Southeastern Europe a new political and security culture. It can be analysed along three dimensions as referred to in this essay: the correspondents, the content of the letters and their overall relevance for the early nineteenth-century security environment.

The correspondence between one of the most vocal defenders of the post-1815 order and several princelings from a Russian–Ottoman–Austrian contact zone is extremely revealing in itself. When it started in 1812, Gentz was already a well-known publicist, familiar with the workings of European diplomacy. Metternich outsourced to him a new communication line with the Sublime Porte, via the hospodars in Bucharest, thus creating a public–private partnership or an intelligence and consulting agency that Gentz carefully developed during the following almost two decades. Gentz mixed business with diplomatic pleasure in this venture. He was well paid for his services, but his 'job' depended on the political stability of the Danubian principalities. He completed his tasks very well, and eventually came to appreciate his correspondents, with whom he stayed in touch after their resignations. As the Eastern Question remained a hot issue in European diplomacy, and Austria was directly interested in its peaceful resolution, Gentz also did great service to

<sup>78</sup> Sweet, 'Gentz and the Danubian Principalities', 16.

<sup>79</sup> Costache, 'At the End of Empire', 106–10.

<sup>80</sup> 'Gentz to Ottenfels, 19 June 1824', in *Gentz Digital*.

Austria's (and Europe's) security. Using his diplomatic connections in Vienna, Istanbul and Bucharest, Gentz managed to bring the principalities as close to Austria as was possible in that historical context. The hospodars, in their turn, learnt the dominant features of the post-1815 international realities. Caradja and Alexandros Soutzos were educated persons, with a well-defined political and diplomatic background nurtured in the multicultural milieu of Istanbul and familiar with the functioning of imperial and inter-imperial politics. The Phanariot habitus was completely absent from Ghica, a native boyar with almost no formal education, but with good intuition and an eagerness to learn. He proved malleable and showed great interest in his epistolary exchanges with Gentz, becoming the latter's favourite prince by his professed seriousness and obedience to his maestro's lessons.

The correspondence acted as a 'distance learning process', allowing the hospodars access to two important components in a decision-making process: intelligence and consulting. Depending on circumstances, both proved equally vital. During the Napoleonic wars, Caradja treasured reliable information, which was a life-saver in itself and in relation to his obligations towards the Porte. Gentz furnished Caradja with more than mere details that were sooner or later published in the European press and communicated via other channels. He sent to Bucharest exclusive and confidential pieces, well-written reports and the knowledge of an expert familiar with the secrets of European politics. Gentz rendered excellent services for his fee. He filled his dispatches with a security vocabulary that privileged not only Austria's interests, but also the idea that the European powers were committed to international cooperation in pursuit of order and peace. Gentz tried to teach his correspondents this new language of security, but he also insisted on norms, rules and procedures meant to familiarise his clients with Europe's new grammar of stability. Gentz was often very critical of Russia's imperial aims in Southeastern Europe, and insisted strongly on the post-Napoleonic collaborative efforts of Tsar Alexander, an example of self-restraint and adherence to the superior interest of Europe's peace. Alexander's taming was, of course, presented as an Austrian success, a clear proof of the beneficial effects of cooperation for a just cause. 'Information brokers' completely lacking diplomatic and military agency, reserved to their suzerain, the hospodars started to whisper messages in the backstage of Europe's Concert. They were occupied with similar urgencies of securing order and tranquillity in small autonomous principalities troubled by national and anti-Ottoman movements, radical conspirators, cosmopolitan brigands or lawless janissaries. After the insurrections of 1821, the princes were confronted with occupation armies and an exiled elite that continuously petitioned the Russian and Austrian courts about the abuses of the hospodars and of their suzerain overlord. The princes replied to their tutor with feedback

that depended on the larger international context. Caradja was not very communicative and confined himself to being a good 'listener'. But Ghica was a diligent student who accumulated much from Gentz's practical course in the new European collective security efforts. In fact, his messages to Vienna are to a great extent a mimesis of his mentor's own European security view.

The relevance of this epistolary relationship for Europe's security changed significantly during the sixteen years that Gentz and the Danubian hospodars stayed in contact. The princes played a double function in an inter-imperial contact zone. Firstly, as relays on an alternative communication network with the Porte, they were carriers of messages to the Ottoman leadership during a period when it was in Europe's best interest (as advocated by Austria and Great Britain) to integrate the Ottoman Empire into a system of European guarantees, a prerequisite to securing long-term peace on the continent. Later, during the long diplomatic conflict between Russia and the Porte (1816–26), when a host of ambassadorial conferences involving European representatives tried to resolve the problem, they fulfilled a similar relay function. Secondly, the princes were responsible for maintaining order and tranquillity in a sensitive territory, which could easily become the scene of a Russian–Ottoman war. Their situation clearly shows that domestic and international politics cannot be entirely divorced. Being privileged provinces of the Ottoman Empire where Russia had a right of intervention, tranquillity in Wallachia and Moldavia was not an entirely domestic issue, but an important European question. The princes were responsible for securing it, but they did not possess the means to do so. However, as was the case with Ghica, he imposed in his country measures meant to resolve conflicts and disputes in the shared interest of European security. Gentz's contribution in convincing him to do so was crucial, as he insisted in his messages on the more peaceful habits of European courts. Gentz attempted, and to a great extent managed, to make Ghica believe and expect that peace could be maintained on the continent and that Russian–Ottoman disputes could be resolved diplomatically, through the mediation of other courts. However, it was not easy to teach cooperation in a Russian borderland, with the Tsar as the legal protector of Ottoman Christians, and with a quasi-general belief that a new war would soon follow. Political elites in the principalities feared Russia, which they secretly supported not from outright sympathy for its political aims, but from their realist belief that the Tsar would be the ultimate victor in his struggle against the Porte. It was in the early 1820s that the political elite in the principalities started to learn about alternative solutions to their Manichaean Russian–Ottoman perspective. This marked the beginning of a gradual turn towards Western Europe as a counterweight for the principalities' tranquillity, which eventually led to the creation of modern Romania, a state that after 1856 was guaranteed for two decades by

the Congress of European powers. After 1821 the question of the Danubian principalities led to a growing European interest in Wallachia and Moldavia, visible in newspaper articles, brochures or travelogues with references to their history, habits and culture. Similarly, local interest in the political decisions taken by European statesmen grew, as presented by the cases of Ghica and Samurçaş. The Prussian consul to Bucharest underscored this in late 1822 when he noted that the boyars' attention was directed to the Congress of Verona, 'et jamais le nom de cette ville . . . ne fut prononcé si fréquent que depuis l'instant qu'on apprit qu'un congrès devait s'y tenir'.<sup>81</sup> We can thus conclude that as an institutionalised practice, the correspondence between Gentz and his Wallachian interlocutors greatly contributed to the dissemination of the European security culture to an Ottoman–Russian–Austrian borderland.

<sup>81</sup> 'Kreuchely to Miltitz, 14 December 1822', in *Hurmuzaki*, X, 198.