

THE UNION OF THE PRINCIPALITIES WITH FOREIGN PRINCE FROM STRATEGY OF DIPLOMACY TO ROMANIAN NATIONAL PROJECT

Cristian PLOSCARU

Abstract. In Romanian historiography, the beginnings of the modern idea of political unity, of the national state, are placed in the years of the rule of the native princes (1822-1828) and of the Russian occupation, when the first modern manifestations in this sense appeared, concerning the union of the Wallachia with Moldavia, as a Romanian state, a buffer state between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, based on the historical rights in relation with the Porte, a state with modern institutions, according to the understanding and interests of the elite of the time. An interesting conclusion, resulting from a contextual analysis of the transformations of the period, without benefiting from too many explicit documentary references. Nevertheless, previous proposals concerning the establishment of a principality or kingdom of Dacia have been intensively discussed by Romanian and foreign historians, but, in our opinion, insufficient clarification has been provided regarding the extent to which these proposals belong or not to the history of the modern Romanian national project.

In order to be able to make some reasoned conclusions we propose to conduct a comparative study. On the one hand, the "Dacia project" promoted by Russia in the years following the Treaty of Kuciuk Kainardji and the Ainali Kavak Convention, subsequently associated with some Russian plans for the reorganization of the Balkans promoted especially by Ioannis Kapodistrias, deserves special attention. On the other hand, after 1821, in a historical context influenced by the outbreak of the Greek revolution and the efforts of the Great Powers to find solutions for the organisation of a Greek Christian principality, *the first Romanian proposals for the Union of Moldavia with Wallachia into a national state* were to appear, the most important being the proposal of January-February 1830 to achieve the union with a foreign prince, in the person of Gustav of Vasa, former Crown Prince of Sweden.

Rezumat. În istoriografia românească, începuturile ideii moderne de unitate politică, de stat național, sunt plasate în anii domniilor pămâtenene (1822-1828) și ai ocupației rusești, când ar fi apărut primele manifestări moderne în acest sens, privind unirea Țării Românești cu Moldova, ca stat românesc, un stat tampon între Rusia și Imperiul Otoman, bazat pe drepturile istorice în raport cu Poarta, un stat cu instituții moderne, conform înțelegerii și intereselor elitei de atunci. O concluzie interesantă, rezultată dintr-o analiză contextuală a transformărilor din epocă, fără a beneficia de prea multe referințe documentare explicite. Cu toate acestea, propuneri anterioare privind constituirea unui principat sau regat al Daciei au fost intens discutate de istorici români și străini, dar, în opinia noastră, nu au fost aduse suficiente clarificări cu privire la măsura în care aceste propuneri aparțin sau nu istoriei proiectului național românesc modern.

Pentru a putea formula niște concluzii argumentate, ne propunem să realizăm un studiu comparativ. Pe de o parte, "proiectul Dacia" promovat de Rusia în anii care au urmat Tratatului de la Kuciuk Kainardji și Convenției de la Ainali Kavak, asociat ulterior unor planuri rusești de reorganizare a Balcanilor promovate mai ales de Ioannis Kapodistrias, merită o atenție deosebită. Pe de altă parte, după 1821, într-un context istoric influențat de izbucnirea revoluției grecești și

de eforturile Marilor Puteri de a găsi soluții pentru organizarea unui principat creștin al Greciei, aveau să apară primele propuneri românești de unire a Moldovei cu Valahia într-un stat național, cea mai importantă fiind propunerea din ianuarie-februarie 1830 de realizare a unirii cu un principe străin, în persoana lui Gustav de Vasa, fost principe moștenitor al Suediei.

Keywords: political emancipation, national state, modern state, foreign prince, comparative method.

The historiographical questions concerning the idea of national unity, of the existence of a national state project among Romanians have a considerable longevity and continue to preoccupy today's historians. The subject is particularly vast, with multiple ramifications, exposes the person who approaches it to a number of risks, and has an undeniable identity value. In this respect, Paul Michelson suggests a distinction between myth as a coherent narrative explaining a particular past and myth as a historiographical fake, a rhetorical construction designed to legitimize and manipulate¹. Is the idea of the nation state a historical reality in the first half of the 19th century, supported by documents, or a historiographical myth? Did the Moldavians and the Wallachians consider themselves two different ethnic entities until 1840, only to discover suddenly in 1848 that they were Romanians? Has our historiography inoculated to the nation a historical memory that has no support in reality, has invented a "struggle for national unity" prior to the forty-eighter movement? There are recent works that explicitly formulate or suggest affirmative answers to these questions².

Two main arguments are invoked, not without complexity, apparently leading to potentially credible demonstrations. The first argument concerns historiography, upon which a discourse of legitimization of Romanianism has been placed, and has been seen as part of the "national rhetoric" of the last almost two centuries. Privileged themes, canonical interpretations, historical myths with an identity function have been identified as certain evidence of the nationalism of Romanian historiography, presented more as an instrument of national identity than of

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¹ Paul E. Michelson, *Teleological History and the Romanian Past: Just Say „No!”*, in „Analele Științifice ale Universității «Alexandru Ioan Cuza» din Iași”, *Istorie*, LXIV/2018, Număr special *Marea Unire a românilor (1918) – Istorie și actualitate*, Volum editat de Petronel Zahariuc, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Adrian Vițalaru, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2019, p. 22-24.

² Lucian Boia, *În jurul Marii Uniri de la 1918. Națiuni, frontiere, minorități*, București, Humanitas, 2017, p. 6-7; Neagu Djuvara, *O scurtă istorie a românilor povestită celor tineri*, București, Humanitas, 1999, p. 148-150. In a recent book, Ioan Stanomir attributes to forty-eighter movement the entire merit of the Romanian national construction, like a "pioneer and laboratory" (p. 15), the architect "of an imaginary that will populate the national pantheon" (p.16), but also the sin of having contributed to the foundation of the later forms of ideological and political authoritarianism (*Așteptând revoluția: Pașoptismul și vocile sale*, București, Humanitas, 2019, *passim*).

knowledge of the past³. Briefly resuming here my observations on the question of the mythologizing historical narrative of the forty-eighter Romanticism, it can be said that, after a careful and critical analysis of the sources, it can be noted that the operation of "mythologizing the past", in search of new meanings and national legitimacy, was mainly a *reinterpretation of some older historical concepts*⁴, in accordance with the new concepts and paradigms of Romantic historiography throughout Europe⁵: the traditional theory of the foundation of the people and of the medieval states, illustrating Romanian continuity, was replaced by the *theory of ethnogenesis*; the idea of the linguistic community (from Miron Costin to Ienăchiță Văcărescu) was transformed into *the theory of the neo-Latin and unitary character of the national language*, the idea of the Christian Orthodox unity (from Mircea the Elder to Michael the Brave) was reinterpreted in the sense of *ethno-national unity* etc. The Romantic conception of history, not without exaltation, was in full accord with a rational vision of social development, inherited from the experiences of the French Revolution, based on the idea that public power comes from society, not from God, and the communities generating legitimate public power have historical personality. Romantic historiography was born in the search for this historical personality, in opposition to the rigidity of the Classicism and the universalism of the Enlightenment.

Regarding the idea of the nation state, and I am not referring here to Michael the Brave, but to the existence of the nation state idea in the first half of the 19th century, the situation was no different. Once reconstructed, exposed and critically analysed, this supposed national historiographical canon, having reached an appreciable age, proved its vulnerabilities. Here are a few: the influence of the Enlightenment and the ideas of the French Revolution was not so strong until the 1840s; in the light of the sources often cited, the boyars appear more concerned to recover the autonomy of the two Principalities in the traditional sense than to pursue a national project; they themselves leave little evidence of a national policy; the few proposals for the union of Moldavia with Wallachia came from the Great Powers, not from the domestic elite; the pro-Russian attitude is clearly outlined in the first three decades of the century; the nobility did not protest at the loss of Bessarabia; the modern reforms introduced by the Organic Regulations were more the work of

³ Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București, Humanitas, 1997, p. 145-157, 215; Keith Hitchins, *Mit și realitate în istoriografia românească*, Traducere de Sorana Georgescu-Gorjan, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1997, p. 261-285; Simona Nicoară, *Miturile pașoptismului românesc: istorie și imaginar*, Cluj Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1999, *passim*.

⁴ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile „partidei naționale” din Principatele Române, I, Sub semnul „politicii boierești” (1774-1828)*, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2013, p. 37-40

⁵ Miroslav Hroch, *The Social Interpretation of Linguistic Demands in European National Movement*, San Domenico, Badia Fiesolana, 1994, p. 35-36; Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, London, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 72-79; Anne Marie Thiesse, *Crearea identităților naționale în Europa. Secolele XVIII-XX*, Traducere de Andrei-Paul Corescu, Camelia Capverde și Giuliano Sfichi, Iași, Polirom, 2000, *passim*

Russia, of Pavel Kiselev's will, than of the boyars, which resisted as best as possible etc.

All these critical references have a reason, they illustrate the need for new historical analyses on the topic under discussion, on how the historical narrative can address the profile of Romanian society in the first half of the "national renaissance" century. However, this analysis does not take place on empty ground. We are not dealing with a mythologizing "national historiography" that should be rectified. The works of Nicolae Iorga and Ioan C. Filitti, the books of Cornelia Bodea and Vlad Georgescu are exemplary in this respect. What is claimed to be the "national historical discourse", with its overtones of nationalism and historical mythologisation, is only a part of it, which is proper to some syntheses of national history, conferences, popularisation works, manuals or studies that are insufficiently documented and analytical. Moreover, as a general line, Romanian historiography cannot be reduced to parts that associate the Romantic phase with the National-Communist one, the critical school and interwar historiography being carefully avoided when "mythologizing", "canonical" works are listed or fragments are quoted. The historiography relating to the idea of the national state in the first part of the 19th century contains many valuable works, which are omitted in the 'demonstrations' considered here. I will refer only to a few of them, chosen by virtue of the fact that they appeared in a special context, following the achievement of the Great Union, when the enthusiasm of the moment and the feeling of national pride could lead historical writing to slip into exaggerated tones. It will be seen that this was not the case.

The first historian I would like to focus on is Nicolae Iorga, considered a "patriarch" of this "mythologizing" historiography. In 1922, was published his lecture *Romanian Solidarity at the beginning of the 19th century*, presented a year earlier, in which he made a clear distinction between "the instinct of unity", which would have affirmed through "the words Romanian and prince [domn] the creed of vanished Romanity", and "the principle of nationalities, having a *historical character*", which was manifested only at the beginning of the 19th century "by a few" and "in certain moments" of crisis⁶. Here Iorga reiterated some ideas formulated in a 1915 study - *The Development of the Idea of the Political Unity of the Romanians* -, where he stated that before the fall of the Phanariot regime "nothing in the sense of a political unity" was clearly found, so that, "after 1822, the movement of ideas, which, without being totally different from the old movement of ideas of the boyars of both Principalities, is in great part distinct, in its origin, as well as in the boldness of its tendencies"⁷. Later, in 1934, he returned to the same ideas, a true historical conception I would say, and clearly denied the

⁶ Nicolae Iorga, *Solidaritatea românească la începutul secolului XIX*, București, 1922, p. 33-34.

⁷ Idem, *Dezvoltarea ideii unității politice a românilor. Lecții făcute la Universitatea din București*, București, Editura Casei Școalelor, 1915, p. 47-48

existence of modern forms of nationalism among the nobility prior to the generation of 1821-1822. This generation of boyars "is influenced in a critical, selective way" by the ideas of the Great French Revolution, and the idea of the national state would have crystallised after 1830, through a "synthesis of traditional values and the new ideas" from 1848⁸. Dimitrie Onciul, a proponent of a concept that equated the linguistic unity of the people and the dynastic claims of certain princes with national unity, in other words, a mythologizing vision of the idea of political unity, inserted some interesting distinctions in a text published in 1919. He describes the Russian project of 1787 and the Austrian project of 1807 concerning the union of Moldavia with Wallachia under a foreign prince as contrary to a genuine national idea and with the aim of political domination, placing the first documentary evidence of the manifestation of the idea of the national state among Romanians at the time of the preparation of the Organic Regulations⁹. Another historian, Alexandru Lapedatu, author of a study on Ion Câmpineanu, concluded that it was only during the Russian occupation (1829-1834) that "the ruling class of boyars [...] realized [...] the possibilities of establishing and organizing a modern Romanian state, in a national sense" and abandoned the hope of receiving help from Russia in order to strengthen the internal autonomy and the "national organization within"¹⁰. În a text that appeared later, in 1943, but with a synthetic value, Gheorghe I. Brătianu considered the political ideas and actions documented until after 1821 to be rather few and questionable in terms of political meaning, because "the Wallachian and Moldavian nobles still believed in Christian solidarity". However, he insisted on the importance of a whole historical context for the accumulation of the conditions for the "formation of Romanian unity". First, the affirmation of linguistic unity and the awareness of the Latin origin, then, gradually, "the *raison d'être* of the political dualism of the Wallachian and Moldavians is fading, to make way for factors that favor the cause of unity"¹¹.

It can be observed that historians among those representative of the era of the Great Union repeatedly make a conceptual distinction between *the unity of Romanians*, understood as an older community unity, and *political unity*, expressed through the idea of the national state. The former would have been structured over a long period of time, existing in the 18th century. The identity of the inhabitants of Moldavia and Wallachia centred around *Orthodoxy* and the *homeland*, the latter based on a

⁸ Idem, *Penseurs révolutionnaire roumains de 1804 à 1830*, București, 1934, p. 11-12.

⁹ Dimitrie Onciul, *Ideea latinității și a unității naționale*, în Idem, *Scrieri alese*, Ediție îngrijită de Acad. Ștefan Ștefănescu, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2006, p. 596.

¹⁰ Al. Lapedatu, *Ion Câmpineanu*, în *Figuri revoluționare române. Cinci conferințe ale Universității Libere*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1937, p. 83.

¹¹ Gh. I. Brătianu, *Origines et formation de l'unité Roumaine*, Institut d'Histoire Universelle N. Iorga, Bucarest, 1943, p. 171-173, 180-187. Vezi și Petre P. Panaitescu, *Problema unificării politice a Țărilor Române în epoca feudală*, în *Studii privind Unirea Principatelor*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1960, p. 84-90.

complex of social relations, with language becoming an active, fundamental factor of identity following the transition from the spoken (vernacular) language to the national language. This type of identity, specific to Romanian unity, allowed the native boyar to speak and write not only Romanian, but also Greek or French, and to remain Romanian, to assimilate the Orthodox people coming from the Ottoman Empire, to be able to be Moldavian native boyar even if he came from Wallachia and the other way. In relation to the other Orthodox people, especially those who came from the Ottoman Empire, the distinction of identity operated more between the "native" and the foreigner than between the Romanians and the "others". In contrast, the Moldavian was not a foreigner in Wallachia, nor the Wallachian in Moldavia. This reality was the basis for the cultural discourse of Moldo-Wallachism in the 1820s and 1830s, an intermediate but still modern phase of *Daco-Romanianism*, the last one, the mature expression of the cultural-historical unity of the nation.

On the other hand, the beginnings of the idea of political unity, of the national state, are placed by those historians in the years of the rule of the native princes (1822-1828) and of the Russian occupation, when the first modern projects in this direction would have appeared. How? By uniting the Wallachia with Moldavia, as a Romanian state, a buffer state between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, based on historical rights in relation with the Porte, a state with modern institutions, according to the understanding and interests of the elite of the time. An interesting conclusion, resulting from a contextual analysis of the transformations of the period, without benefiting from too many explicit documentary references.

The second argument used by the authors who push the origins of the idea of the national state after 1848 refers to a traditional society, divided into boyars and peasants, deeply tied to old customs and socio-political practices, with a political culture of submission and an accentuated "parochialism", an elite which has learned to navigate, often skilfully, between the interests of the neighbouring Great Powers, aiming only to survive, and a peasantry with little involvement in history, attached to religious, social and family values inherited from the 18th century. As proof of that, this elite - the boyars - did not produce anything substantial in terms of national thinking in the first half of the 19th century¹². The affirmation of the ideas of Romanian nation and of national state would have belonged exclusively to the forty-eighters¹³. No doubt it also belonged to the forty-eighters, a "generation" - the term deserves to be re-discussed - that spoke, in memoirs, in literature, in

¹² *Istoria României prin concepte. Perspective alternative asupra limbajelor social-politice*, editori Victor Neumann și Armin Heinen, Iași, Polirom, 2010, p. 71-74, 107-110, 179-181. Much more nuanced analytically, Silvia Marton focuses on the conceptual imprecision of the political vocabulary and language of the "alphabet of transition" period, compared to the political discourse of nation-building during the second half of the 19th century (Silvia Marton, *La construction politique de la nation. La Nation dans les débats du Parlement de la Roumanie (1866-1971)*, Iași, Institutul European, 2009, p. 50-57).

¹³ Stanomir, *Așteptând revoluția*, p. 37-58.

correspondence, in political projects. They speak overwhelmingly compared to the habits of Romanian society at the time. The boyars spoke in writing much less and with a certain amount of caution, in a complicated manner, almost duplicitous to the modern eye, with many and sometimes difficult to decipher meanings¹⁴. For this reason, and not because its members were devoid of ideas or adherence to a national project, explicit testimonies are quite rare, but if you look carefully, are relevant, enlightening.

In order to be studied a comparison must be considered. On the one hand, the "Dacia project" promoted by Russia in the years following the Treaty of Kuciuk Kainardji and the Ainalî Kavak Convention, subsequently associated with some Russian plans for the reorganization of the Balkans promoted especially by Ioannis Kapodistrias, deserves special attention. On the other hand, after 1821, in a historical context influenced by the outbreak of the Greek revolution and the efforts of the Great Powers to find solutions for the organisation of a Greek Christian principality, *the first Romanian proposals for the Union of Moldavia with Wallachia into a national state* were to appear, the most important being the proposal of January-February 1830 to achieve the union with a foreign prince, in the person of Gustav of Vasa, former Crown Prince of Sweden.

Kingdom of Dacia project

This project has received attention in the Romanian historiography¹⁵, but we think it is useful to review some factual aspects, extracted especially from a surprisingly rich foreign documentation (sources and bibliography). In 1781, the Russian dignitary Alexander Bezborodko conceived a plan for the geopolitical reconfiguration of Ottoman-ruled south-eastern Europe. This plan has received the attention of the historiography of the "Eastern Question" and has often been associated, in one form or another, with the origins of the project for the union of the Romanian Principalities with a foreign prince¹⁶. Intensely valued by Soviet historiography as proof of Tsarist political altruism in the effort to liberate the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans from Ottoman rule¹⁷, the "Dacia" project was also

¹⁴ Nicolae Kretzulescu, *Amintiri istorice*, București, Editura ziarului „Universul”, 1940, p. 13.

¹⁵ Iorga, *Dezvoltarea ideii unității politice a românilor*, p. 32-35; P. P. Panaitescu, *Problema unificării politice a țărilor române în epoca feudală*, in *Studii privind Unirea Principatelor*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1960, p. 85-87; Leonid Boicu, *Principatele Române în raporturile politice internaționale (secolul al XVIII-lea)*, Iași, Junimea, 1986, p. 240-251; Daniel Niță-Danielescu, *Războaiele dintre ruși și turci din secolul al XVIII-lea și implicațiile lor asupra Bisericii Ortodoxe Române din Moldova*, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2009, p. 114.

¹⁶ Stelian Neagoe, *Istoria unirii românilor*, I, *De la începuturi la Cuza Vodă*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986, p. 79-84; Harald Heppner, *Austria și Principatele dunărene (1774-1812): O contribuție la politica sud-est europeană a Habsburgilor*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000, p. 99-100.

¹⁷ Ion Eremia, *De la „proiectul dacic” la anexarea Basarabiei. O filă din istoria țarismului de „eliberare” a creștinilor de sub Imperiul Otoman, reflectată în istoriografia rusă contemporană*, in

described as an ingenious instrument of pan-Orthodox political propaganda, or intended to mislead Austria about the true objectives of the Russian policy¹⁸. The project stipulated that Moldova and Wallachia would constitute an "independent" principality under the protection of Austria and Russia, ruled by an Orthodox prince, appointed with the agreement of the two powers, which began the negotiation of an anti-Ottoman alliance¹⁹.

This project was not only part of a broader vision of how to resolve the "Eastern question" in accordance with the basic principles of the European balance of power system and in relation with Austria, but also an expression of a certain orientation in Russian foreign policy. Grigory Potemkin supported this "Dacia" plan because it responded to a fundamental principle of Russian politics: the cultural and religious peculiarity of Russian expansion consisted in the fact that all Orthodox co-religionists were perceived as a kind of single spiritual community, related from above, which looks at Russia as its patroness and liberator²⁰. At the same time, Potemkin benefited from the collaboration of the most determined supporters of a long-term alliance with Austria – Alexander Bezborodko, P. V. Zavadovsky and A. R. Vorontsov²¹.

A Ukrainian by birth, and a protégé of General Pyotr Rumiantzev, who introduced him into official circles in Petersburg, Alexander Bezborodko quickly attracted the attention of the Tsarina, who appointed him as her personal secretary, gaining a significant influence at the imperial court²². He joined the circle of those who advocated an active policy towards the Ottoman Empire, with the objective of expanding Russia's territory in the Black Sea basin in several directions, towards Crimea, the Dniester and the Caucasus, and soon became one of the leaders of the "society" or the "Eastern Party", as it was called in the reports of the diplomats accredited to St Petersburg. Opposed to the "Northern Party", led by Panin, which

„Cercetări istorice”, new series, 30-31, 2011-2012, p. 263-286; Natsvaladze Mamuka, *Stalin Against Engels – for the Historiography of the Greek Project*, in „Education and Science of Today: Intersectoral Issues and Development of Sciences”, Conference Proceedings, vol. 2, Cambridge, Vinnytsia, 2021, p. 112-120.

¹⁸ Emanuel Sarkisyanz, *Russian Imperialism Reconsidered*, in *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, edited by Taras Hunczak, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1974, p. 45-46; Traian Stoianovich, *Russian Domination in the Balkans*, in *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, p. 210-211.

¹⁹ Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's War of Emergence 1683-1797*, London, New York, Pearson Education, 2003, p. 379-380.

²⁰ Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Potemkin: Catherine the Great's Imperial Partner*, New York, Vintage Books, 2005, p. 219-220.

²¹ David Saunders, *The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture 1750-1850*, Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1985, p. 65-68.

²² Son of a high-ranking Cossack officer (Andrei Bezborodko), Alexander became a senior official in the Foreign Ministry and later a member of the Imperial Council (Serhii Plokhly, *Ukraine & Russia: Representations of the past*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 44).

supported the orientation of Russian foreign policy in the Baltic Sea basin, an alliance with Prussia and Denmark, the political tutelage of Poland²³, the "society" was at the origin of the plans for the division of the Ottoman Empire presented by Ecaterian II to the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, without the local elites (Romanians, Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians) being consulted in any way.

Initially, in September 1780, Alexander Bezborodko submitted to the Tsarina a "memorial on political affairs" regarding the division of the European territories of the Porte between Russia and Austria²⁴, which included a first draft of the "Dacia" plan and the famous "Greek plan", with the prince of the new Balkan state of the southern Danube being the Tsarina's nephew, Konstantin Pavlovich, without saying anything about the leadership of the future "Dacia" state²⁵. However, the priority for Russian policy remained the implementation of the plan for the annexation of the Crimea, outlined by Potemkin himself in his 1782 project entitled "On Crimea"²⁶. In a letter from Catherine II to Joseph II, sent on 10 September 1782, Tsarina listed three main problems: the question of free navigation through the Straits, the issue of Crimea and the question of "Moldavia and Wallachia"²⁷, proposing the formation of an "independent state between the three empires" and guaranteed by them together. "This state, once known as Dacia, may consist of the provinces of Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia, under a sovereign of the same religion as the dominant Christian religion in these provinces", designated as hereditary prince by an agreement between Russia and Austria. The demarcation of the borders of this state proves interesting and relevant: The Dniester, in the vicinity of Russia, the Danube, on the border with the Ottoman Empire, the Carpathians and the Olt, on the border with the Habsburg Empire²⁸. In addition that the Russian border should be moved from the Bug to the Dniester and along the Black Sea coast, the Tsarina also wanted Ochakov, and "one or two islands" in the Mediterranean from which Russian-flagged ships could be protected²⁹. The letter, drafted by Bezborodko and endorsed by Potemkin, clearly expressed Russia's basic objective in a future war with the Ottoman Empire – the Black Sea basin³⁰.

²³ Isabel de Madariaga, *The Secret Russo-Austrian Treaty of 1781*, in „Slavonic and East European Review”, 38, nr. 90/1959, p. 120-122; David L. Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia: the Panin Party*, NewHaven, Yale University, 1975, p 248-251.

²⁴ Madariaga, *The Secret Russo-Austrian Treaty of 1781*, p. 129.

²⁵ Hugh Ragsdale, *Evaluating the Traditions of Russia Aggression: Catherina II and the Greek Project*, in „Slavonic and East European Review”, 66, nr. 1/1988, p. 94, 96.

²⁶ Jeanne Éleonore de Cérenville, *Memoirs of the Life of Prince Potemkin*, London, Henry Colburn, 1812, p. 51-53.

²⁷ Arfred Ritter von Arneth, *Joseph II und Katharina von Russland*, Wien, Wilhelm Braumüller, 1869, p. 143 (10/21 September 1782, Echaterine II to Joseph II).

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 153-154.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 155.

³⁰ Adolf Beer, Joseph Ritter von Fiedler, *Joseph II und Graf Ludwig Cobenzl, I, 1780-1784*, Wien, 1901, p. 348 (St. Petersburg, 22 november/4 december 1782, Cobenzl to Joseph II).

Joseph II cleverly countered the proposal and invoked in his answer of 13 November 1782, after consultations with the imperial cabinet, the Austrian domination of "Lesser Wallachia", Oltenia, between 1718 and 1738, but also the older claims of some princes of Transylvania to "restitutio Daciae", as legitimating precedents of the Austrian involvement in Wallachia, in the event of the elimination of Turkish suzerainty, claiming Khotyn, with a territory extending to the border with Galicia and Bukovina, Oltenia, the fortress of Nicopole, Vidin, Orshova and Belgrade³¹. The Austrian claims aroused discontent in Petersburg, because it was obvious that Vienna wished to challenge a possible Russian supremacy on the Lower Danube, which explains why the Tsarina, on Potemkin's advice, raised the stakes of the negotiations, insisting in January 1783 on the implementation of the "Greek" and "Dacia" plans, in the hope that she would be able in this way to shift the projected *compensatory cession* in favor of the Austrians from the Lower Danube to the Dalmatian coast of the Mediterranean and the islands of the Adriatic³².

From those years, after the conclusion of the secret Austro-Russian treaty (1782), essential to Vienna's anti-Prussian policy, Emperor Joseph II and Chancellor Kaunitz had sought to limit Russia's territorial gains at the expense of the Ottoman Empire in the Black Sea basin and the Balkans³³. That is why, when the Russo-Turkish war broke out in 1787, Austria could not remain neutral in order to prevent Russia from becoming the dominant power on the Lower Danube³⁴. In Petersburg this was well understood. As long that the Austrian armies had occupied Wallachia and part of Moldavia³⁵, Alexander Bezborodko considered that there were no resources available to carry out the Greek "great plan", "by reasons of political considerations, as by reason of our internal condition"³⁶, but the "Dacia" project was mentioned in a letter from the Tsarina to Potemkin (March 1790), who was asked to communicate this request to the Ottomans, if the military operations would develop positively for Russia³⁷. In this context, being in Iasi in 1791, after the Austrians had concluded the Treaty of Sistova with the Ottomans (August 1791), Bezborodko hoped that the Turks would be forced to subscribe to the formation of an "independent" Christian principality, consisting of "the Banat of Craiova,

³¹ Ritter von Arneth, *Joseph II und Katharina*, p. 172-173 (1/12 November 1782, Joseph II to Catherine II).

³² *Ibidem*, p. 186-187 (4/15 January 1783, Catherine II to Joseph II).

³³ M. S. Anderson, *The Great Powers and the Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1783-84*, in „Slavonic and East European Review”, 37, nr. 88/1958, p. 28-30.

³⁴ Karl A. Roider, *Kaunitz, Joseph II and the Turkish War*, in „Slavonic and East European Review”, 54, nr. 4/1976, p. 545.

³⁵ N. Iorga, *Ceva despre ocupațiunea austriacă în anii 1789-1791*, București, Librăriile Socec, 1911.

³⁶ *Arkhiv Knyazya Vorontsova*, XIII, *Pis'ma kniazia Bezborodki (1778-1799)*, Moskva, Tyapografya Lebedeva, 1879, p. 140 (10/22 February 1788, Bezborodko to Vorontsov).

³⁷ Ragsdale, *Evaluating the Traditions of Russia Aggression*, p. 111.

Wallachia, Moldavia, Bessarabia and part of Poland", but he was worried about the lack of support of the local elite, the Moldavian boyars, for this project³⁸.

A clear expression of the "compensation policy", which was in the nature of European equilibrium of power in the eighteenth century, not only in the case of peace treaties, but also in the negotiation of alliances, the "Dacia" project did not go beyond the level of a working hypothesis in the plans to liquidate the Ottoman presence in Europe, having also a pan-Orthodox ideological relevance, in the sense of *the establishment of an Orthodox empire*, extended, in one form or another, from the East to the entire Balkan Peninsula³⁹. *In our opinion, this project cannot be included in the history of the origins of the modern Romanian national state*, although the "Dacia" plan did not die at that time. Through one of its promoters, Alexander Bezborodsko, supported by other Russian officials, it reappeared in other forms, adapted to later political circumstances. The support for this plan towards the end of the 18th century from Fyodor Rostopchin, Bezborodko's protégé⁴⁰, who was the author of a project to divide the Ottoman territories on the Danube between Russia and Austria⁴¹, and Viktor Kochubei, who, from the position of foreign minister, at one point, proposed the dragoman of the Porte, Constantine Ypsilanti as prince of a state formed by the Ionian Islands, with a status similar to that of Moldavia and Wallachia⁴², recommended Ioannis Kapodistrias as a high official in the ministry he led⁴³, and later, after 1815, supported the plans for the federalization of the Balkans, in order to liquidate Ottoman rule and consolidate a "civilized" Russian domination of the Lower Danube⁴⁴.

The idea of the establishment of a principality of Dacia under Russian patronage also appears sporadically in some boyar memoirs. The most elaborate of these belong to Grigore Băleanu, a great Wallachian boyar, and Mihail Sturdza, the future ruler of Moldavia. The first one was written shortly after the death of Tudor Vladimirescu and the defeat of *Etairia*, by a pro-Russian boyar with political ambitions, and was addressed to the Tsar Alexander I, with the request that to

³⁸ *Arkhiv Knyazya Vorontsova*, XIII, p. 225 (17/29 November 1791, Bezborodko to Zavadovsky).

³⁹ Stoianovich, *Russian Domination in the Balkans*, p. 206-207.

⁴⁰ Anatole Henri Philippe Ségur, *Vie du Comte Rostopchine gouverneur de Moscou en 1812*, Paris, Bray et Retaux, 1871, p. 35-36.

⁴¹ *Pis'mo grafa F. V. Rostopchina o sostoianii Rossii v kontse Ekaterinskago tsarstvovaniie*, in „*Russkii Arkhiv*”, nr. 3/1878, Moskva, p. 292 (9/20 March 1794, Rostopchin to Vorontsov); *Zapiska grafa F. V. Rostopchina o politicheskikh otosheniakh Rossii v posledniie mesiatsy pavlocskogo tsarstvovaniia*, in „*Russkii Arkhiv*”, nr. 1/1878, Moskva, p. 109.

⁴² *Arkhiv Knyazya Vorontsova*, XVIII, Moskva, 1880, p. 183-184 (3/14 December 1798, Kochubei to Vorontsov).

⁴³ Nicholas Charles Pappas, *Greeks in Russian Military Service in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1991, p. 137.

⁴⁴ Cristian Ploscaru, *Between the Diplomacy of War or Peace and the Ottoman Occupation of the Romanian Principalities (1821-1822)*, in „*Analele Științifice ale Universității «Alexandru Ioan Cuza» din Iași*”, Istorie, serie nouă, LXVII, 2021, p. 245-264

support the establishment of a state of Dacia led by an native prince; a rather confused reference was made to the "Dacian people" living in the area between the Carpathians and the Danube, and the protection of Russia was invoked⁴⁵. The language of the memoir, contaminated with ethnic-national references, present in the year of Tudor's revolt, does not change the meaning of the document – *a single Romanian state under the protection (and domination) of Russia*. The second memoir was written by Mihail Sturdza in 1825 – *Considérations sur la Moldavie et la Valachie au commencement de 1825* – and is a narrative about the origins of the Romanians, with Dacia in the center, and about the historical rights of the Romanian Principalities towards the Ottoman Empire, justifying the union of Moldavia with Wallachia under an native prince and the protection of Russia.⁴⁶. Without daring to compare the future native ruler with Decebal, Mihail Sturdza made the association between Trajan and the Tsar of Russia, as a civilizing factor, under whose protection Dacia could be reborn. In fact, the whole historical incursion has as red thread, "the will of the Providence that our fate [of the Romanians - n.n.] to be united with that of our co-religionists in the North". The aim was to argue for a change of suzerainty, through a "happy political association" between the two Principalities, with an native prince (him), benefiting from "the same distinct political regime" established by the Porte's capitulations⁴⁷. This idea of the "national state", obviously twisted, dangerous, which Mihail Sturdza was advocating in 1825, blinded by the ambition to rule, had a past in the Principalities going back to the years of the elaboration of the "Dacia plan". It had deceived the minds of some of the boyars in January 1773, when the great Wallachian boyar Mihai Cantacuzino, the bishop of Râmnic, Chesarie, and the bishop of Buzău, Dositei Filitti, asked Russian Count Alexander Obreskov that "Wallachia and Moldavia [...] be added to Poland [recently divided between the neighbours, Russia, Austria and Prussia - n.n.] with privileges and exemptions, such as those of Courland today", to form an autonomous entity⁴⁸.

Were these boyars unconscious or traitors? If in 1773, the idea of replacing Ottoman sovereignty with the suzerainty of Russia, an Orthodox empire, could gather many rational arguments, not only related to religion, in 1821 and later the boyars did not

⁴⁵ *Documente privind istoria României. Răscoala din 1821*, II, *Documente interne*, redactor responsabil Andrei Oțetea, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1960, p. 54-55 (10 aprilie 1821, *Ciorna unui memoriu către țarul Rusiei*).

⁴⁶ *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, Colecția Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, Supliment I, vol. IV, 1802-1849, documente adunate, coordonate și publicate de D. A. Sturdza, D. C. Sturdza și Octavian Lugoșianu, București, 1891, p. 63-69 (*Considérations sur la Moldavie et la Valachie au commencement de 1825*)

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, Supliment I, p. 68.

⁴⁸ *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor de banul Mihai Cantacuzino*, publicată și adnotată de N. Iorga, București, 1902, p. 513 (*O deosebită propunere către domnul Obrescof*). Exactly the same phrases, obviously copied, appear in *O altă propunere către contele Romanțof*, document from 1774 (*ibidem*, p. 533).

know what was happening in Bessarabia? The sources show that there were concerns and grievances, but nevertheless the Tsar was for the Moldo-Valachian boyars, the elite of a community of Orthodox natives, the only legitimate sovereign⁴⁹. Only that Russia from the time of Catherine II forward was no longer a *Christianitas*, like the boyars saw it, how Mihail Sturdza still described it in his memoir of 1825, but *an empire with a formidable force of assimilation, of linguistic, juridical and political colonization of other Orthodox peoples*⁵⁰. The elderly boyar Barbu Văcărescu clearly understood that when he told to the Prussian consul, around 1826, that "Russia protects us only to dominate us, guarantees our privileges in order to remove them at the first opportunity, but what can we do in the present circumstances? Deserted by the Porte, exposed to the caprices of a prince obedient to the orders of the Russian consul, we must rally to her [Russia - ed.] to save what can still be saved."⁵¹. "We will have to get used to the Russian constitution and to the ukazy"⁵².

During the period of the elaboration of the Organic Regulations, the concerns of the Moldo-Wallachian boyars, focused on the question of the reorganization of the institutions *a la russe*, pointed out by the foreign consuls in the Principalities⁵³, were to generate some rather timid approaches to obtain the Union of the Principalities with a foreign prince and under a regime of international guarantees. These initiatives demonstrate two things: *the idea of the Union was politically rational for the boyars, at least for part of them, and the Russian protectorate inspired a deep sense of fear and mistrust*. The first of such initiatives, with a certain

⁴⁹ Cristian Ploscaru, *Originile „partidei naționale”*, p. 514-515.

⁵⁰ Arriving in Bucharest and aware of the Tsar's intention to reorganize the institutions in the Principalities after the war, Alexander I. Mihailovski-Danilevski asked Minciaki what would be the purpose of the reforms. The answer was short and disarming: "above all, the authority and influence of the Russian consuls must be increased in the Principalities" (*Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, II, (1822-1830), new series, coordonatori Paul Cernovodeanu, Daniela Bușă, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2005, p. 410).

⁵¹ *Documente*, Colecția Hurmuzaki, X, *Rapoarte consulare prusiene din Iași și București (1763-1844)*, adunate, adnotate și adnotate de N. Iorga, București, 1897, p. 416 (April-May 1827; Kreuchely to von Miltitz).

⁵² *Ibidem*, X, p. 431 (11/23 november 1827, Kreuchely to von Miltitz). Equally lucid, a Moldavian boyar, perhaps Costache Conachi, confessed to the French diplomat Bois le Compte the fear of Russia that dominated among the elite of Iași, because "we see how the court of St. Petersburg directs against us the cunning used against the Poles. It maintains our internal divisions, just as it did with the first ones", after already annexing half of their country (*Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, II, p. 143).

⁵³ *Documente*, Colecția Hurmuzaki, XXI, *Corespondență diplomatică și rapoarte consulare austriece (1828-1836)*, publicate de Ion I. Nistor, , București, „Cartea Românească”, 1942, p. 144-145 (17/29 July 1829, Lippa to Metternich); *ibidem*, XVII, *Corespondență diplomatică și rapoarte consulare franceze*, publicate de Nerva Hodoș, București, 1913, p. 216 (20 September/2 October 1829; Violler to Polignac); *Correspondence Respecting the Organization of the Danubian Principalities 1828-1836*, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, July 1878, p. 3 (4/16 May 1828, Blutte to Lord Cowley).

political coherence and connection to the diplomatic reality of the time, took place in the months immediately following the conclusion of the Treaty of Adrianople.

The Swedish Prince Gustav of Vasa, candidate for the reign of the Romanian Principalities

Towards the end of 1829, in the context of the negotiation of the Treaty of Adrianopole, which raised serious concerns about a future annexation of the Principalities to the Russian Empire⁵⁴, several great Moldavian boyars informed the Austrian Agency in Iasi of their intention to request from the Great Powers a collective protection, similar to that projected for Morea in the "Greek question", following the conclusion of the *Second Protocol of London* (22 March 1829)⁵⁵. The appeal of the Moldavian boyars for Austrian support, undertaken with great discretion, was followed by an official appeal to the President Pavel Kiselev and a quasi-official one to the *Foreign Office*, through the British Consul Blutte.

The British Consul was visited by Mihail Sturdza, who told him about the intention of some members of the "reform committee" to demand the Union of the Principalities, the collective guarantee of all the Great Powers, a foreign prince and asked him to send a letter to Lord Heytesbury, the British Ambassador in Petersburg. Furthermore, Blutte learned from Michael Sturdza that the initiators took advantage of the secret nature of the meetings of the "reform committee", requesting Pavel Kiselev's consent to send a memoir to the Tsar, in which they "asked His Majesty to consent [,,] to a union of the two Principalities into a single state, governed independently, with hereditary succession of a Prince from a dynasty of Europe, following the model of the newly founded Kingdom of Greece"⁵⁶, according to the London Protocol. They hoped that the guarantees offered to Greece by the Great Powers would be a model for guaranteeing the "independence and security of the Principalities", the expression *guarantee* replacing the word *protection*, used until then in the boyars memoirs.

⁵⁴ Russian military presence in the Principalities, regardless of the circumstances, was seen by the British already in 1828, at the height of the "Greek crisis", as a serious danger to their interests and a deadly threat to the survival of Ottoman control of the Balkans (*Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, IV, May 1827 to August 1828*, Edited by his son, The Duke of Wellington, London, John Murray, 1871, p. 276-278; 14/26 February 1828, Wellington to Ferronays). In the Tory party, then in power, there were divergent views on Russia: Wellington, prime minister until November 1830, wanted some "break with Russia", but the ambassador to Constantinople Stratford Canning, supported further negotiations with the Eastern power about the Greek question (Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston (1830-1841)*, I, *Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question*, G. Bell & Sons, London, 1951, p. 14-15).

⁵⁵ *Documente*, Colecția Hurmuzaki, XXI, p. 147 (Sibiu, 1 august 1829, Fleischhackl către Metternich); 148 (10 August 1829, *Extras dintr-o scrisoare confidențială din Iași*).

⁵⁶ *Correspondence Respecting the Organization of the Danubian Principalities*, p. 31-32 (17/ 29 January 1830, Blutte to Heytesbury), p. 39 (17 January/8 February 1830, Blutte to Robert Gordon)..

The initiators of this project proposed a candidate, one of the sons of the former King of Sweden, and a itinerant princely court in the two capitals, following the model of the Dutch royal court⁵⁷. The whole beauty of the idea of the Romanian national state, as we know it from 1848 and 1856-1859, appeared in this concept, which gives concrete form to the brief historical account of a presumed proposal by Iordache Catargiu for the Union of the Principalities, made in the "reform committee" and rejected at Petersburg⁵⁸.

Returning to the foreign prince, the "young Gustavus of Sweden"⁵⁹, in the absence of other information, genealogical and biographical data point to the Swedish Prince Gustav of Vasa, Count of Itterburg (9 November 1799-4/5 August 1877), the first-born son of King Gustav IV Adolf of Sweden (1778-1837) and Queen Frederica Dorothea Wilhelmina of Baden (1781-1826), sister of Tsarina Elisabeth Alexeevna, wife of Alexander I⁶⁰. Prince Gustav (Gustavus, Gustafsson) was heir to the Swedish throne until his father's dethronement in 1809 in a coup d'état, quietly supported from Paris, but triggered by the defeat in the war with Russia, that led to the loss of Finland⁶¹. An interesting biographical detail, which has proved important to our investigation, is Gustav of Vasa's engagement to Marianne of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau, in June 1828, which was broken off as a result of Swedish political pressure⁶². Furthermore, in a later account, contained in a travel diary to the Principalities in 1857, the German physician Karl W. Wutzer⁶³ inserted the information that at one time Hans Christoph von Gagern, former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, had proposed Gustav of Vasa to Metternich to become Prince of a Danube confederation⁶⁴. Following Wutzer's infra-page references, a letter of 27 September 1828, from Hans Christoph von Gagern to Baron von Stein, former Prime Minister of Prussia, has come to light, in which stated that he had sent a "small memo to Metternich", proposing Gustav of Vasa as Prince of Moldavia and Wallachia. He saw this approach as a very good solution "pour coupe court à bien des choses", because "the state of these

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁵⁸ *Documente*, Colecția Hurmuzaki, XVII, p. 394 (5/17 May 1834, *Memoriul lui Bois le Compte, despre situațiunea politică a țărilor românești*).

⁵⁹ *Correspondence Respecting the Organization of the Danubian Principalities*, p. 33 (24 January/5 February 1830, Blutte to Cowley).

⁶⁰ Irene Scobbie, *Historical Dictionary of Sweden*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, p. 83-84.

⁶¹ Franklin D. Scott, *Sweden. The Nation's History*, With an epilogue by Steven Koblik, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1988, p. 295-296.

⁶² *Memoir of Benjamin, Lord Bloomenfeld*, II, Edited by Georgiana Lady Bloomenfeld, London, Chapman and Hall, 1884, p. 267.

⁶³ Klaus Heitmann, *Imaginea românilor în spațiul lingvistic german 1775-1918. Un studiu imagologic*, traducere și introducere de Dumitru Hîncu, București, Editura Univers, 1995, p. 180.

⁶⁴ K. W. Wutzer, *Reise in den Orient Europas und einen Theil Westasiens zur Untersuchung des Bodens und seiner Producte, des Klimas, der Salubritäts-Verhältnisse und vorherrschenden Krankheiten*, Elberfeld, Bädeler Verlag, 1860, p. 187-188.

principalities is always an apple of discord" between the Great Powers, and the Tsar "Nicholas promised not their conquest, but a better state" of things⁶⁵. The moment seemed opportune to him because the uncertain situation in Greece (August-September 1828⁶⁶) allowed a discussion between the Great Powers on the Oriental crisis, involving the organisation of a European congress⁶⁷.

In the autumn of 1828, in the midst of the Russo-Turkish War, serious negotiations about the union of the Romanian Principalities with a foreign prince were excluded. We do not know the fate of von Gagern's memoir, but an Austrian offer to this purpose was not made through diplomatic channels. The former Dutch prime minister, von Gagern, had a personal interest in finding a princely crown for Gustav of Vasa's fiancée, Princess Marianne of the Netherlands, and Baron von Stein could have played a role in this political game in line with his old relations with the Romanov imperial family⁶⁸. Two leading politicians at the time of the Congress of Vienna, the epicentre of legitimism, now "retired", were trying to return in this way to the mainstream politics⁶⁹. After all, Gustav of Vasa was the Tsar's nephew.

But the idea did not die; on the contrary, it remained in a diplomatic drawer until late 1829, when Austrian diplomacy brought it to the surface in some form and by indirect channels. It happened in November 1829, when Costache Conachi was visiting the Austrian Agency in Iași. Questioned by an interlocutor from the Agency, the Moldavian vornic, who was "on holiday" (he was a member of the "reform committee" operating in Bucharest), first tried to motivate the Austrians to provide guarantees for the Principalities, stating that organic legislation, apparently a "constitution", would deprive them of real autonomy, explicitly stipulated in the Treaty of Adrianopole. Asked about the advantages that Austria would gain from a stronger intervention, he replied with great cunning, launching the rather clever idea that Russia intended to attract the sympathy of the inhabitants of eastern Austria, which he saw as threatened by future Russian annexations, with a military base in the Principalities⁷⁰ and with the help of the Orthodox of the Habsburg Empire, through the "new constitution" (organic Regulation)⁷¹. Gustav of Vasa's name does not appear in the reports of the Austrian agents in the Principalities, but the dialogue with Costache Conachi seems to me the most plausible channel through which the

⁶⁵ G. H. Pertz, *Das Leben des Ministers Freiherrn vom Stein*, VI, 1823 bis 1831, Berlin, Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1855, p. 614 (15/27 September 1828, von Gagern to von Stein).

⁶⁶ C. W. Crawley, *op.cit.*, p. 113-115.

⁶⁷ G. H. Pertz, *op.cit.*, VI, p. 614-615.

⁶⁸ J. R. Seeley, *Life and Times of Stein, or Germany and Prussia in the Napoleonic Age*, III, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1878, p. 501-502.

⁶⁹ About the political and personal relations between Metternich, Baron de Stein and von Gagern, William D. Godsey Jr, *Nobles and Nation in Central Europe: Free Imperial Knights in the Age of Revolution 1750-1850*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 213-216.

⁷⁰ *Documente*, Colecția Hurmuzaki, XXI, p. 184 (20 November 1829, *Scrisoare confidențială din Iași*).

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, XXI, p. 184 (11/23 November 1829, Lippa to Metternich).

boyars of the "reform committee" learned that there was a Swedish prince who Austria would support to rule the United Principalities.

The candidacy of the Swedish Prince Gustav, Count of Itterburg, for the rule of the United Principalities is almost unknown in historiography, being mentioned only in passing by Radu R. Florescu, after studying British consular reports. Leaving aside for the moment the extremely interesting domestic political context, it must be said that this episode can only be fully understood in connection with the international implications of the Greek question and the fate of the former Swedish royal family. While the Great Powers involved in the Greek question - England, France and Russia - wanted a solution to the Greek question on the basis of the London Protocols and the negotiations with the Ottoman Empire, Metternich believed that only a European congress could find a solution that would harmonize the interests of all the Powers without weakening the Ottoman Empire too much. The Austrians' concern about the danger of Russian annexation of the Romanian Principalities, which they were trying to prevent without creating a major crisis in Russo-Austrian relations, is also well known. Gustav of Vasa's candidacy emerges as a diplomatic tool in line with Austrian strategy, but for the success of which British support was essential⁷².

From the perspective of our theme, this episode represents, unlike the Russian "Dacia" project and in qualitative contradiction to that plan, the first concrete attempt by some members of the Romanian elite to obtain international support for the creation of the Romanian national state through the union of Moldavia and Wallachia under the rule of a foreign prince, who was to establish a princely dynasty capable to consolidate the principle of the Union.

⁷² See more details about this episode at Cristian Ploscaru, *Politică, reformă și interogații identitare în Moldova, 1822-1832*, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2022, p. 206-221.