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# THE OTTOMANS AND EASTERN EUROPE

## Borders and Political Patronage in the Early Modern World

MICHAŁ WASIUCIONEK

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# A Note on Transliteration, Place-Names and Personal Names

Throughout the early modern period, as well as nowadays, the inhabitants of Eastern Europe spoke a plethora of languages and put them in writing in several scripts. As a result, modern scholar faces the dilemma of choosing the system(s) of transliteration of non-Latin script, none of which is without its drawbacks. For the sake of clarity, I have opted to render Ottoman and Romanian terms and names according to the rules of modern Turkish and Romanian orthography. For Russian and Ukrainian, I have opted for a slightly modified system employed by the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. While this arrangement is by no means a watertight solution, I hope it will prove convenient enough for the reader.

Choosing in which language to render place-names constitutes an even more complex challenge. Apart from the multiethnic character of Eastern Europe in the early modern period, the political map of the region changed enormously since the period of the discussion, making each choice somewhat arbitrary and – in some instances – politically charged. In choosing variants of place-names employed in the text, my guiding idea was again that of clarity. Hence, I employ standard English equivalents whenever they are available. In the clear majority of cases where no such option is available, I have preferred to use the place-names from the period as to avoid confusion as to which polity a particular town or village belonged at the time; I mention the modern equivalent whenever a certain locale is mentioned for the first time. Finally, I took account of the ethno-linguistic situation on the ground, particularly in opting for Ukrainian rather than Polish place-names for heavily Orthodox regions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Personal names are even more problematic in this regard. Many of the individuals who make their appearance on the pages of the present study were polyglot and used different variants of their names, displaying different aspects of identity depending on the audience they addressed. For instance, the members of the Movilă family, prominently featured in the present study, are known as *Movilă*s, *Mogiła*s or *Mohyla*s, depending on the language of the source and national historiographic tradition. The same applies to many of magnate

families of Ruthenian origin and Orthodox faith. As a rule of thumb, I have used the form I considered as the best fit with the individual's relationship with political, confessional and ethno-linguistic communities. Hence, I opted for Ruthenian-Ukrainian form in the case of Orthodox magnates of Ruthenia and Ukraine, and for Romanian forms for lineages of Moldavian and Wallachian origins, such as Movilăs. Finally, royal names – as customary – are rendered in English.

The dates, unless specified otherwise, are provided according to the Gregorian calendar.

**Map 1** Ottoman–Polish borderland and the Danubian principalities in the mid-seventeenth century.

# Introduction

With each gloomy, chilly day of December 1639 spent in Istanbul, Romaszkiewicz grew increasingly frustrated with his Ottoman hosts.[1] As an envoy of the Polish king, he had been sent to the Sublime Porte with a seemingly straightforward task of making arrangements for the arrival of a grand embassy, scheduled for the following spring. However, he found himself stuck in the Ottoman capital for months, in vain demanding a farewell audience and letters for King Vladislav IV. For this delay he blamed the deputy grand vizier (*kaymakam*), Tabanıyassı Mehmed Pasha. The latter disingenuously argued that the prolonged stay in the Ottoman capital was beneficial for the diplomat, allowing him to get a better grasp of imperial affairs. Romaszkiewicz, in turn, was convinced that the real reason for Mehmed Pasha's foot-dragging was a conflict unfolding between the rulers of Moldavia and Wallachia, over seven hundred kilometres north of Istanbul. According to the envoy, the *kaymakam* was in cahoots with Moldavian voivode Vasile Lupu, whom he had appointed in November to the throne of Wallachia. However, the incumbent Wallachian ruler, Matei Basarab, refused to comply and readied his troops to resist the invaders. Mehmed Pasha tried to prevent the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth – the Porte's chief rival in the Danubian principalities – from intervening in the conflict by effectively detaining Romaszkiewicz in the Ottoman capital. To break the stranglehold, the latter appealed to the *kaymakam*'s enemies within the imperial establishment, but they were unable to provide him with any substantial help, leaving Romaszkiewicz with no choice but to wait until the events run their course.

However, the situation changed dramatically as soon as the news from Wallachia started pouring in, sending shockwaves through the Ottoman political landscape. Rather than the reports of an expected Moldavian victory, the couriers brought letters from Matei Basarab, who boasted about his decisive victory over his rival's army. Vasile Lupu barely managed to evade capture and with a small retinue sought Ottoman protection. The news emboldened the Wallachian

voivode's patrons at the Porte, who immediately moved against Tabanıyassı Mehmed Pasha, accusing him of overstepping his authority and deceiving the sultan. Seeing his plans unravel, the *kaymakam* immediately summoned Romaszkiewicz, handed over the letters and bid the diplomat farewell.

Although Romaszkiewicz was eager to leave the city, his departure had to be postponed once again, this time due to a torrential storm that hit the Ottoman capital. Stuck in Istanbul for another day, the envoy decided to pay the *kaymakam* one more courtesy visit. However, by the time he arrived at the grandee's mansion, Mehmed Pasha was on his way out, summoned by Sultan Murad IV, and Romaszkiewicz was instructed to wait for his return. Mehmed Pasha never returned to his residence. Instead, the sultan's guards showed up at the gate, barged their way into the mansion and began sealing the palace and detaining members of the *kaymakam*'s household. In the resulting chaos, Romaszkiewicz was mistaken for one of the grandee's servants and had a difficult time explaining his status before being let go and returning – clearly shaken – to his quarters. Later that day he learned of Tabanıyassı Mehmed Pasha's arrest and prompt execution on the orders of Murad IV, as the grandee took the fall for the Moldavian–Wallachian conflict and its outcome.

While Mehmed Pasha's Wallachian venture failed, this was not due to the Polish–Lithuanian intervention that he had been trying to prevent. In fact, he was extraordinarily successful in isolating Romaszkiewicz, who languished ineffectually in the Ottoman capital and had no impact on the course of events. Instead, the decisive blow that cost the grandee his life and almost brought down his political network was another faction very much like his own, spanning between the imperial centre in Istanbul and the Danubian principalities and including both members of the Ottoman establishment and Greek Orthodox elites of the periphery. This episode is by no means unique, and similar cross-border factions appear throughout the seventeenth century. The same applied for the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, where powerful magnates formed their own cross-border ties with the voivodes and boyars of Moldavia and Wallachia. As these factions clashed and grappled with each other, the political fault lines ran not along political boundaries in the region, but rather across them. The elites of the Ottoman Empire, Poland–Lithuania and the Danubian principalities focused more – it would seem – on bringing down personal and political enemies rather than pursuing geopolitical objectives, however defined. As this book will show, this was precisely the case. Political actors throughout the region established cross-border patronage ties as means to secure resources and power necessary to realize their own personal and factional ambitions

by reaching out and co-opting allies beyond the pale. As the number of such patronage networks proliferated, they coalesced into an alternative geography of power in the region, very much at odds with our perception of political geography. This process not only had a profound impact on both the political culture of respective polities, but also on the geopolitical shape of the region in the early modern period.

## The problem of state and the allure of factionalism

The last decade of the sixteenth century constitutes a major watershed in the history of Polish–Ottoman relations. In the preceding period, the dynastic complex of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – from 1569 known as the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth – constituted arguably one of the Sublime Porte's least troublesome neighbours. The Jagiellonian kings of the sixteenth century strived to maintain amicable relations with the Ottoman Empire – a sentiment overwhelmingly supported by the nobility. Following the dynasty's extinction in 1572, the Sublime Porte played an instrumental role in denying the Habsburgs the Polish throne.[2] For their part, the Ottomans were also wary not to spoil amicable relations between the two powers. However, by the mid-1590s the relations began to sour, ushering a period of growing tensions and recurrent warfare, which consumed over a quarter of the following century.

Two major issues propelled this escalation. In the east, predatory raids by the Crimean Tatars against Polish–Lithuanian and Muscovite territories intensified, but at the same time were increasingly matched by the rise of Zaporozhian Cossacks. As the latter coalesced into a numerous and efficient fighting force, they began to target Ottoman territories along the Black Sea coast. Since both the Commonwealth and the Porte lacked resources and resolve to curb their subjects, the raiding economy of the steppe continued, frequently spiralling out of control and putting both polities on the collision course.[3] The success of the 1648 Cossack rebellion against the Commonwealth only complicated the matters as both Poland–Lithuania and the Ottomans found themselves dragged into the infighting between competing Zaporozhian leaders, each trying to establish his rule across both banks of the Dnieper River.

Further to the west, along the arc of the Carpathian Mountains, another contentious issue was the control of the Danubian principalities of Wallachia (*Eflâk*) and, particularly, Moldavia (*Boğdan, Karaboğdan*). The position of these polities, sandwiched between the two territorial behemoths, forced their

rulers to juggle their allegiances in order to stay afloat in the stormy waters of regional politics. Although in the 1380s, the voivodes of Moldavia had become vassals of the Polish Crown and continued to swear oaths of fealty to the kings in the following period, by the sixteenth century it firmly entered – along with Wallachia – the Ottoman orbit, rendering Polish claims to suzerainty all but defunct. The Jagiellonian kings, wary not to provoke the Porte, did not challenge this new state of affairs, but at the same time never renounced their suzerain rights. When the opportunity presented itself during the Ottoman–Habsburg 'Long War', Polish–Lithuanian troops entered Moldavia and installed a new voivode as a Polish–Lithuanian vassal, thus opening a new chapter of rivalry between the two powers, in which the Danubian principalities constituted both the stage of military conflict and its coveted prize.

However, once the dust settled and the Karlowitz treaty of 1699 concluded what turned out to be the last Polish–Ottoman war, its provisions hardly justified the resources – manpower, war material and money – poured into the conflict. Although the Ottomans succeeded in fending off the Polish–Lithuanian challenge in Moldavia and Wallachia, and even managed to increase its control over the principalities by means of so-called 'Phanariot regime', the boundary demarcated in 1703 differed little from the one established in the previous centuries. Moreover, the conflict took its toll on both Poland–Lithuania and the Porte: while in the 1590s both polities constituted first-rank regional – and, in the Ottomans' case, global – players, a century later they were widely considered spent powers, fighting a rearguard battle against more aggressive Russia and the Habsburgs.

Often overshadowed by the Russo-Ottoman wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ottoman–Polish rivalry of the preceding period has nonetheless garnered considerable scholarly attention.[4] Admittedly, the fact that most studies regarding the topic appeared in local languages has limited their circulation beyond the confines of national historiographies, leading to their relative compartmentalization and limiting dialogue between them. In effect, different strands of scholarship continue to remain out of step with each other, with concepts long discarded within one field – such as the notion of 'Ottoman decline' – still perpetuated in others.

However, irrespective of the sources they utilize and interpretations they offer, most scholars share a similar set of assumptions regarding the logic of early modern Eastern European politics. Central to this paradigm is the concept of the states as cohesive, unitary actors, led by 'collective mind of the government' and pursuing their own geopolitical interests, in competition with each other on

the international stage. Within this model, the Sublime Porte, Poland–Lithuania and the Danubian principalities appear to us as 'billiard balls on a pool table': solid, homogeneous objects, which change their course upon bumping into each other, but with no impact on their internal structure.[5] The success or failure of any particular polity boils down to the international balance of power and the ability of those in charge to correctly define and successfully pursue the state's objectives. Polish–Ottoman struggles for the Danubian principalities would, therefore, emerge from geopolitical imperatives of both powers, each seeking to protect and expand its zone of influence in the region – a battle from which the Porte ultimately emerged victorious. As to the political elites of the region, the state-oriented perspective reduces them to mere tools of the government, their only distinguishing feature being the level of competence they displayed when performing their duties.

Placing the state as the central actor in the early modern Eastern Europe hinges on a set of unspoken assumptions regarding structures and practices of political life, shaped by our own familiarity with modern nation states. We tend to think of the world as divided into defined, discrete units that act as political 'containers' setting territorial limits on the political activity of its inhabitants. Contact with the world beyond the pale occurs within a different realm, one of international politics, which remains the sole preserve of national governments.[6] The distinction between a territorially bounded sphere of domestic politics, accessible to non-state actors, and a separate, states-only world of international affairs, makes up the geography of power that scholars addressing seventeenth-century Eastern Europe have usually taken for granted.[7]

However, once we scratch the surface, these assumptions become problematic. The 'inside–outside' dichotomy underpinning this model is not a given. Instead, its existence hinges on state institutions themselves, which, by means of border policing, disciplinary measures and the activity of a specialized ministry of foreign affairs, discourage and suppress cross-border ties they consider illegitimate.[8] Thus, the maintenance of territorial sovereignty and the state's monopoly to interact with the outside world on a political level requires considerable resources and a degree of autonomy from other social forces.

Early modern polities lacked both. The wave of revisionist scholarship, in the making since the 1980s, has increasingly undermined the monolithic vision of premodern states.[9] As these critiques point out, early modern rulers possessed neither resources nor political will to seal off their domains from the world beyond the pale.[10] Political life unfolded within the context of what André Holenstein aptly described as *societas civilis cum imperio*, whereby

'society was transfused by a multitude of power relations of political and public character, and political power was at the same time always rooted in specific social situations'.[11] With overlapping jurisdictions, primacy of personal ties over impersonal institutions, and multiple political centres, early modern political world was characterized by porous boundaries and criss-crossing networks of power. Discussing the Ottoman case, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk pointed out that it is difficult to even establish what constituted the 'inside' and 'outside' of the 'well-protected domains'.[12] This undermines both the assumption that the geography of power in the early modern world was not dissimilar from the modern one, and the very notion of the state's agency.

Even against the backdrop of the early modern world in general, Eastern Europe seems to be a particularly awkward fit for a state-centred approach. Throughout the period, the region suffered from what we may call 'a low density of stateness', with state institutions lacking effective means to govern their own subjects. In the words of Orest Subtelny, this weakness was so pronounced that Eastern European polities hardly qualify as states:

> With weak rulers, minuscule armies, handfuls of officials, and complete decentralization, seventeenth-century Eastern Europe was in effect a region of stateless societies. [T]o argue that these East European polities were states in the modern or, indeed, in any sense of the word is simply misleading. Nor does calling them weak states solve the problem, for that appellation assumes that power rested, albeit insecurely or incompletely, in a specific type of political organization which, [...] was functionally non-existent in the region.[13]

Although Subtelny's claim of Eastern Europe's 'statelessness' is obviously exaggerated, it is clear that polities so diffuse we may discuss their very existence were unable to act either as monolithic actors or even as political containers, imposing limits on their own elites. Indeed, even a cursory survey shows a plethora of officials, dignitaries and individuals engaged in the conduct of Polish–Ottoman–Moldavian affairs, often working at cross-purposes.

At the first glance, this hardly applies to the Ottoman Empire, which Subtelny places squarely among foreign absolutist powers that succeeded in subduing local nobilities of the region. By the mid-sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire reached a considerable level of centralization, relying ideologically on the sultans' claims to universal empire, while institutionally on political slavery, efficient bureaucracy and one of the most formidable militaries of the early modern world. In this sense, it could hardly be more different from rudimentary system of governance in the Danubian principalities, or Poland–Lithuania, whose assertive nobility limited royal power through privileges and representative

assemblies. However, once we shift our focus away from the institutional scaffolding towards practices of political life, the differences largely dissipate. Just as among Polish–Lithuanian nobles or Moldavian–Wallachian boyars, Ottomans political endeavours in the region fell victim to factional squabbles, personal rivalries and outright sabotage.

Trying to reconcile this apparent lack of coordination with the assumed centrality of state interest forces a modern historian into an unenviable position of an arbiter in political conflicts of the past. To salvage the notion of a coherent state policy, they must take sides, deciding – based on fragmentary and often partisan evidence – whose actions furthered the state's purported goals, as well as those who stood in the way. In other words, the statist paradigm forces us to identify statesmen and spoilsports.

Seen through this lens, the seventeenth century would appear as a period when spoil sportsmanship ran rampant and true statesmanship was in short supply. In modern scholarship, this has been often described in terms of a parallel decline of Poland–Lithuania, the Ottoman Empire and the Danubian principalities. As generations of scholars argued, in the late sixteenth century, the high standards of competence and moral probity that had allowed these polities to flourish started to give way to widespread cronyism, corruption and incompetence. Engaged in petty squabbles, the elites of the seventeenth century lost sight of state interests, thus contributing to an inevitable decline, which reached its nadir in the eighteenth century.[14]

First formulated by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century moralists, who contrasted the mores of their own times with idealized virtues of yore, the narrative of moral decline was subsequently adopted among modern scholars. However, as it has been increasingly pointed out, there is little evidence to support it, and we find a number of capable individuals within the ranks of Ottoman officials, Polish–Lithuanian nobles and Moldavian–Wallachian boyars throughout the seventeenth century. Moreover, recent decades brought a major revision of the period as a whole: no longer perceived as an era of decline, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries constituted a period of crisis and transformation in respective polities, which reshaped existing institutions and saw new patterns of political life emerging across the region. This suggests that the problem lies not with the seventeenth-century elites themselves, but with our expectations regarding their political behaviour. We should instead approach them on their own terms, with political power and authority highly personalized affairs, instead of forcing them onto a Procrustean bed of state-centred lens.[15]

The present book aims to accomplish precisely that, providing a reinterpretation of the political dynamics between the Sublime Porte, Poland–Lithuania and the Danubian principalities during the seventeenth century. As I argue, once we shift our attention away from the state towards individual actors, we discover an alternative geography of power in the region. Rather than conforming to the territorial limits of their respective polities, seventeenth-century elites reached out beyond the pale, forming patronage ties and factional networks that bound together individuals of different creeds, identities and political allegiances in pursuit of their own political interests. These cross-border alliances presented them with a viable alternative mechanism of procuring political, military and economic resources, which they could subsequently deploy to gain a competitive edge over their rivals. As such ties grew in number and importance, they amalgamated into an alternative, network-based geography of power, with profound effect both on the political culture in the region and the political map of Eastern Europe of the seventeenth century. Most importantly, the survival of Moldavia and Wallachia as distinctive political entities within the Ottoman orbit was less the product of the balance of power between Poland–Lithuania and the Porte than the outcome of cross-border factional rivalries and alliances, governed by different rules and imperatives than those of the states. Thus, to make sense of historical developments of the region, this alternative geography must be taken into account.[16]

In arguing for the importance of cross-border patronage, it is not my intention to claim that the state and its institutions were entirely irrelevant to the broader developments in the region. On the contrary, in many respects it provided scaffolding that structured political life. It served political actors by bestowing an aura of legitimacy upon their actions, set the limits of political arenas, and provided a considerable share of money and manpower by means of taxation and military mobilization. As a result, many of the resources circulating through cross-border networks were harnessed from what we would call state institutions, and many of those partaking in these networks held state offices. However, it would be a mistake to interpret the relationship between state and cross-border patronage as parasitical or to reduce the latter to a mere footnote. While patronage networks often fed on state resources, the opposite was also true, as many actors deployed money, manpower and information they acquired from their allies on the other side of the border in discharging their official duties and mobilizing troops for war. Thus, cross-border patronage should be understood as co-existing with rather than supplanting altogether the political geography of polities and their institutions. From the perspective of individual

actors, both constituted avenues providing access to political resources, shaping their political strategies. As I will demonstrate throughout the study, though, factional concerns rather than state interest were the overarching factor that shaped the political landscape between Poland–Lithuania, the Ottoman Empire and the Danubian principalities.

In approaching this topic, I do not intend to provide a full account of patronage and factionalism in Eastern European politics, nor do I venture to provide a continuous narrative of Polish–Ottoman–Moldavian relations between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Either would be impossible tasks within the limits of the present study. Instead, I settle for a more modest goal of investigating the socio-political logic underpinning the emergence of cross-border patronage, the patterns of connectivity it produced, and the impact it had on geopolitics and political culture of early modern Eastern Europe. The focus on mechanisms means that the present study does not seek to provide a unitary narrative of individual factions' rise and fall, but rather offers a series of 'snapshots' elucidating particular features of the political environment they produced. As a result, several events and developments that had impact on geopolitics of the region, such as the emergence of Cossackdom, or the ecclesiastical ties that bound Poland–Lithuania, Ottoman lands and the Danubian principalities, have been left out of the analysis, unless crucial for understanding Polish–Ottoman–Moldavian relations.

Scholars have long recognized the role of patronage and factionalism in the political history of the Ottoman Empire, Poland–Lithuania and the Danubian principalities.[17] At least since the 1970s, studies have highlighted the growing importance of patron–client ties as a defining feature of seventeenth-century politics in the region. Authors have – either implicitly or explicitly – overwhelmingly kept their analyses within the bounds of a single polity, without considering the changes in other polities of the region. However, the devolution of power away from the royal centre and formal institutions towards patronage networks led by members of the elite seems to have occurred across the board at roughly the same time. This general 'rise of the faction' reduced rulers from the paramount arbiters in political affairs to mere faction leaders, struggling for hegemony in their respective political arenas. In turn, Moldavian–Wallachian boyars, Ottoman grandees and Polish–Lithuanian magnates increasingly accumulated power and privatized state resources, becoming the effective masters of their political environment.

While numerically inferior to the dense webs of patron–client relations within respective political arenas, cross-border bonds nonetheless had an outsize

impact on the political landscape, offering actors access to resources they would otherwise be unable to acquire. However, their role in the political trajectory of the region has been largely obscured by the tacit assumption that factional politics occupy a subordinate position vis-à-vis state interests. Even if the phenomenon attracts any attention among scholars, it quickly becomes clear that the existing paradigm lacks the vocabulary to describe it, and particular instances of cross-border patronage have been treated as isolated incidents rather than pieces of a larger puzzle.[18] Only in recent years, a number of studies have successfully adopted a more comprehensive approach to the topic, demonstrating both the persistent importance of the phenomenon itself and methodological advantages such perspective has to offer.[19] Thus, the revision has long been overdue, as noted by Palmira Brummett, who pointed out that Ottoman historiography needs 'a paradigm, based on those commonly employed for the "classical," medieval, and modern worlds, which takes connectivity for granted and applies it to the Ottoman Empire'.[20] A unified approach towards Eastern European cross-border patronage presents such an opportunity, while at the same time elucidating the logic driving the Porte's presence in early modern Eastern Europe.

## Patronage, networks and arenas

The task of approaching this network-based political geography requires us to recalibrate our conceptual tools and shift our focus away from the state as the central unit of analysis. This is by no means to suggest that formal institutions, territoriality were irrelevant. On the contrary, what we tend to associate with the state – formal institutions, legal framework and legitimacy – had a profound impact on the operation of cross-border patronage. Access to resources by means of office-holding played a central role in the political life, and as such cannot be simply written out from the analysis. However, individuals with such an access were not merely servants of the state, but also political actors, utilizing their position to pursue their own ambitions of wealth, power and career advancement. Thus, it is incumbent not so much to take the state out of the equation, but rather to disaggregate it to make room for alternative forms of political organization. In order to do this, I rely on three key notions: patronage, social networks and socio-political arenas.

Since its introduction into the vocabulary of historians and social scientists in the 1960s, the concept of patronage has been widely applied across a variety of disciplines. In the process, it acquired chameleon-like qualities, coming in

different shapes and flavours. Most scholars rely on a metaphor of a 'lopsided friendship' – a dyadic, particularistic relationship between two social actors of unequal social status.[21] Although couched in the rhetoric of friendship and personal affinity, it is instrumental at its core, with both parties privy to the arrangement interested in obtaining resources that would otherwise remain out of their reach.[22] The exchange of resources within a patron–client dyad, however, does not follow the logic of commodity economy but instead subscribes to the Maussian logic of gift. Rather than constituting a one-off transaction, patronage remains open-ended, and in numerous instances could extend beyond a single generation.[23] The bond was maintained by a constant state of indebtedness, with the 'balance sheet' of the dyad kept in a constant state of disequilibrium.[24] However, once such perceived equilibrium is achieved and the exchange of resources ceases, both sides part ways and the relationship itself withers away.

Identifying patron and client within the dyad is where the relative consensus dissipates. Since the Polish–Lithuanian, Moldavian–Wallachian and Ottoman political actors partook in a variety of different social hierarchies, it is impossible to assume a one-to-one correspondence between formal hierarchies and the relative standing of partners within a dyad. Trying to establish whether, say, the Palatine of Ruthenia held a higher position than the *beylerbey* of Özü, would miss the point.[25] In order to identify the hierarchy within a dyad, scholars frequently resort to examining the type of resources each party brings to the relationship, patrons providing protection and material rewards in exchange for the client's loyalty.[26] However, I consider this distinction at the same time too vague and too restrictive. First, rather than a resource in its own right, loyalty constituted a precondition for the bond to coalesce and was expected from both the patron and his client. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in the course of the present study, various types of resources, such as money and material goods, flowed in both directions, providing the relationship with much-needed flexibility. Thus, the only way to distinguish a patron from his subordinate is to examine their behaviour and rhetoric within the dyad itself. This praxeological approach allows us not only to handle multiple social and political hierarchies, but also to address individual dyads in their own right while placing them within a larger social context.

Another important – and often ignored – aspect of patronage is its cultural framing and norms of behaviour. While the instrumental character of 'lopsided friendship' would suggest that the rhetoric of emotional affinity was a mere sham, this was clearly not the case. Patrons and clients alike had to conform to mutually accepted norms of interaction, which reinforced the hierarchy, but also

maintained the honour of their partners intact. A failure to do so could put the whole arrangement in peril.[27] At the same time, long and frequent experience of successful cooperation carried the potential of reshaping the world view of patrons and clients alike, leading them to perceive patronage as a primary problem-solving mechanism and to an '"uncontested acceptance" (*doxa*) of clientelistic politics'.[28]

By its very nature, a patron–client dyad belongs to the realm of micro-politics, and in isolation could hardly produce a significant impact on regional politics. This issue of different scales poses distinct challenges.[29] First, large-scale patronage networks of the seventeenth century were more than a sum of their parts, but rather systems encompassing hundreds of individuals, spread across vast expanses of the Ottoman Empire, Poland–Lithuania and the Danubian principalities, operating under the constraints of slow and unreliable communications. Under such circumstances, direct contact between patron and his clients was often out of question, creating the demand for brokers that would provide a measure of coordination and trust between otherwise disconnected sectors of the network.[30] Although these brokers did not contribute their own resources, they performed crucial role in making patronage network viable. This was particularly important given that, in many instances, large-scale clienteles shared little more than their attachment to a single patron, increasing the risk of intra-factional struggle.

The second element in the methodological scaffolding is the concept of socio-political networks. As a concept that stresses connectivity and relational character of social interaction, they provide an approach suited not only for reconstructing cross-border patronage, but also a variety of other forms of social and political life. Its methodological flexibility has borne considerable fruit in discussion of state and state formation, envisaged as a 'coordinated and territorially bounded network of agencies exercising political power'.[31] Therefore, approaching political relations as a bundle of networks allows us to put formal institutions and patronage networks on an equal footing, thus removing the assumed hegemony of the state so prevalent in existing scholarship. The wealth of sociological and historical studies employing social network analysis provides us with a fine-tuned conceptual apparatus which can be readily applied to the subject at hand. Particularly, the notion of social capital, understood as 'a person's location in a structure of relationships', helps us to understand and address particular advantages of cross-border patronage.[32] However, this does not mean that thinking in network-based terms is free of its shortcomings and limitations.

First, it is crucial to keep in mind that social networks are a tool we use to trace a phenomenon rather than the phenomenon itself. While a graph depicting ties between individual members of seventeenth-century elites gives the impression of constant contact and stability, factional cooperation was by no means continuous. Instead, it materialized in the form of isolated instances of exchanges and communication, which – if frequent enough – allow us to identify long-term alliances. As a result, the patronage network of an Ottoman grandee or a Moldavian boyar was by no means a tangible, static system, but rather a set of flows and circuits, owing its existence to the circulation of resources.[33] Ideally, a comprehensive list of such exchanges would provide us with a relatively complete set of data lending itself to standardization and quantitative analysis. However, this is obviously not the case: much of factional business was conducted orally, leaving us with no paper trail to follow, and the extant sources are fragmentary and imprecise. As a result, rather than a strict application of the social network analysis statistical apparatus, we are forced to treat the networks as a descriptive tool.

Secondly, the continuous character of social networks poses a perennial problem of 'boundary specification'. Delimiting the object of study is inevitably arbitrary, posing a double risk. On the one hand, adopting too-inclusive criteria of selection can easily lead to an explosive growth in the number of individuals and connections one has to take into account. Obviously, mapping *all* social ties is an impossibility and runs the risk of burying relevant information under a heap of superfluous data. Not all connections an Ottoman official maintained were of equal importance, and it is to be expected that he would have more frequent contact with people in his immediate vicinity. This does not necessarily mean, however, that such connections were of greater or equal importance as those with his clients away from the capital. In contrast, settling for restrictive criteria runs the risk of excluding connections vital to understanding of political dynamics in the region.

To avoid both pitfalls, I decided to fix my vantage point in the Danubian principalities and identify instances of cross-border patronage that bound local boyars to their counterparts at the Sublime Porte and in the Commonwealth. In the next step, I proceeded 'outward', taking into consideration other actors relevant for the topic at hand. While focusing on Moldavia and Wallachia – a political and economic backwater – may not seem the most obvious choice, the peripheral perspective they offer has distinct advantages. On the one hand, since the resources at disposal of the boyar elite were meagre in comparison with Polish–Lithuanian magnates or Ottoman grandees, local political life was

more sensitive to the instances of cross-border patronage, making them easier to identify. Moreover, since the Danubian principalities constituted a contested space between the Commonwealth and the Porte, it is possible to use Polish–Moldavian factionalism as a 'control group' to elucidate particularities of Ottoman presence in the region.

Finally, as Claire Lemercier rightly pointed out, it is easy to overstate the importance of social networks, while ignoring other aspects of social life that cannot be described in relational terms. This is particularly the case factors such as cultural norms or individual agency.[34] Looking at seventeenth-century politics through the lens of social network analysis, it is easy to forget that the space Ottoman, Polish–Lithuanian and Moldavian elites inhabited was not a boundless, undifferentiated political landscape, devoid of political, religious and social boundaries. Even if not impermeable, these fault lines certainly mattered, shaping behaviour and posing obstacles to unrestricted flow of resources. In fact, the fragmentation of political landscape was a precondition for the emergence of the phenomenon at hand. For the cross-border patronage networks to exist, there had to be borders in the first place.

In order to account for different environments in which Eastern European elites operated, I utilize the notion of *socio-political* arenas. As employed by Frederick G. Bailey, the arena constitutes a social space, in which political actors compete for resources, the competition itself being regulated by a particular set of rules.[35] These included intersubjective personnel rules, dictating who could partake in the competition, as well as institutions and norms regarding behaviour, constraints and opportunities within the arena. Resources, embedded in the arena and mobilized via political networks, constituted the coveted prize of political and social rivalry. Needless to say, these rules differed significantly across political environments. Entering Ottoman establishment entailed – with some exceptions – embracing Islam or being born a Muslim; in turn, the personnel rules of Polish–Lithuanian arena made it an exclusive preserve of the nobility, leaving commoners and foreigners outside the competition. Personnel rules in the Danubian principalities were more inclusive, but they also barred Muslims and a variety of different categories from participating in local political life.

Introducing the notion of arenas into the framework provides us with several advantages. First, it allows us to accommodate non-relational features of political and social life without falling back on the idea of the state as a coherent entity. In contrast with the latter, arena does not carry the same essentialist undertones, instead conveying an image of a more nebulous political space with porous

boundaries. At the same time, it is better suited to describe the structure of early modern politics, whereby actors partook in a number of smaller, encapsulated arenas, connected but nonetheless autonomous from state-level political dynamics. These smaller pockets of political life could operate according to different sets of rules, further restricting the circle of those allowed to enter. This was the case both in the Ottoman provinces and at the imperial centre, where the distinction took a physical form in restricting the access to the inner palace (*enderun*) for those serving in the 'outer' administration.[36]

The existence of multiple political arenas, each with a different set of personnel rules and norms governing competition for resources, posed a serious obstacle to actors' ability to move between different political environments. While not impossible, such mobility required much more than moving from one geographical location to another. In most instances, it entailed radical steps, such as religious conversion, and carried considerable risks of confiscation of property, permanent exclusion from one's native socio-political environment or even death. This sufficed to discourage most political actors from crossing over unless forced to do so by circumstances. At the same time, resources embedded in other arenas, if mobilized and deployed, could provide a competitive edge in political competition. These two factors – the advantage such resources could provide and the actors' inability to access them directly – provided the main thrust for the development of cross-border patronage. By expanding their networks beyond individual political arenas and forming alliances beyond the pale, Ottoman grandees, Polish–Lithuanian nobles and Moldavian–Wallachian boyars were able to create a complex system of mobilization, circulation and conversion of otherwise inaccessible resources, harnessing them for their own political goals.

## The outline of the book

In order to elucidate different aspects of the cross-border patronage and its impact on Ottoman presence in the seventeenth-century Eastern Europe, the present study is divided into an introductory chapter and two main parts. Chapter 1 provides a general survey of the human and political context that led to the emergence of cross-border patronage in the seventeenth century. For the sake of clarity and to familiarize the reader with the region, the chapter largely relies on the state-oriented perspective, providing an account on the historical origins of the seventeenth-century political landscape of Eastern Europe. Thus,

it touches upon two major aspects: on the one hand, the geopolitical order that took shape in the region, and on the other hand, the structure of Ottoman, Moldavian–Wallachian and Polish–Lithuanian socio-political arenas in which individual actors operated. Finally, in the concluding section of the chapter, I discuss the general 'rise of the faction' in this period, emphasizing parallels and similarities throughout the region.

With the wider background established, Part One approaches cross-border patronage at a micro-scale, focusing on mechanics that allowed for establishing and maintaining such cooperation. Chapter 2 discusses the tools the elites employed to build a viable cross-border faction and provide it with trust and cohesion. To overcome challenges posed by distance, unreliable communication and deficit of trust, Ottoman grandees and their Eastern European counterparts, creatively adapted their toolkits of faction-building in order to ensure loyalty and cooperation within their networks. Their determination to make such connections viable highlights the importance of patronage resources cross-border patronage provided. Chapter 3 examines both the character of these resources and the ways in which they circulated throughout the networks, constituting in the process a complex mechanism of transfer and conversion of different types of capital.

Part Two shifts the focus away from the mechanics of cross-border patronage relations towards their impact on the region's political life. Chapter 4 demonstrates, on the basis of three cases, that conflicts usually interpreted by scholars as driven by 'state interests' were in fact fuelled by personal and factional competition that spanned across multiple arenas. In the process, not only did patronage ties play a crucial role in procuring and transferring political resources, but at the same time harmonized the conflicts across the political boundaries. As a result, a conflict that originated in Moldavia or Wallachia could easily upset political balance at the Sublime Porte or in the Commonwealth, as actors prioritized factional agendas over purported 'state interest'.

Chapter 5 focuses on one of the most striking developments in regional politics during the seventeenth century, namely the political survival of Moldavia and Wallachia as distinct political entities. Although this period witnessed several attempts by either the Ottomans or Poland–Lithuania to introduce direct administration in the Danubian principalities, both Moldavia and Wallachia retained their political structures despite their apparent political and military weakness. While all scholars attributed both the inception and ultimate failure of incorporation plans through the lens of geopolitical rivalry and balance of power in the region, I argue that the explanation lies with cross-border factionalism,

which undermined cooperation within the arenas, while strengthening alliances between them. However, the style and efficiency of Polish–Lithuanian and Ottoman patronage proved unequal for the Moldavian and Wallachian boyars, affecting the course of the seventeenth-century political struggle in the region. Conclusion brings together different threads running throughout the book, discussing the role of cross-border patronage in deciding the final outcome of seventeenth-century Polish–Ottoman rivalry in the region. As I argue, since the trajectory of regional politics was driven by factional concerns rather than state interest, the results of the conflict cannot be boiled down to the balance of power between the Porte and the Commonwealth. Instead, different styles of patronage played a crucial role in swaying Moldavian–Wallachian boyars in favour of the Porte.

Both the Ottoman Empire and particularly Poland–Lithuania have been often depicted in historiography as failures, rooted in the inability of their elites to adapt to new circumstances and produce institutions necessary for the political survival of the state. However, as I argue, the survival of the state was by no means the ultimate goal for Polish–Lithuanian, Ottoman or Moldavian–Wallachian elites, whose eyes were set on their own social and political reproduction and a political system that would allow them to thrive. Although these interests could align perfectly in many instances with those of the state, this could not be taken for granted, especially if alternative routes to procure necessary resources – such as cross-border patronage networks – were available. In that sense, Eastern European elites were not that different from their counterparts elsewhere, although particularities of the region meant that the gap between factional interests and matters of state survival put the Sublime Porte, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Danubian principalities at a particular disadvantage when they faced mounting challenge from their rivals.