

Identity Choices Among Romanian Officers in the Habsburg Army

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Abstract: In recent times, the identity of the Habsburg military has been the subject of numerous studies aiming to explain the behavior of this social-professional category. However, in Romanian historiography, research on this subject is almost completely lacking. The present work aims, first of all, to open the historiographical discussion on the identity choices of Romanian soldiers and officers in the Habsburg army. Alongside national identity and dynastic loyalty, frequently addressed in historiography, special attention should be paid to other types of loyalties or identities, developed within the military environment and related to the appropriation of a well-defined code of honor. It was in this context that the officer's honor, transformed into a military identity, took shape, as well as other types of attachments, such as that to the state, which is different from dynastic loyalty, or that to the territory. Last but not least, this paper also focuses on how all these different identities are harmonized into multiple identities, defining the behavior and actions of the soldiers of the multinational Habsburg army.

Keywords: Habsburg Army, Romanian militaries, military identity, supranational identity, multiple identities

Rezumat: Opțiuni identitare în rândul ofițerilor români din armata habsburgică. În perioada recentă, identitățile militarilor din armata habsburgică i-au fost dedicate numeroase studii, în căutarea unor explicații cu privire la comportamentul apartenențelor acestei categorii sociale și profesionale aparte. Cu toate acestea, la nivelul istoriografiei române, cercetările dedicate acestui subiect lipsesc aproape cu desăvârșire. Lucrarea de față își propune, înainte de toate, deschiderea discuției istoriografice referitoare la opțiunile identitare ale militarilor și ofițerilor români din armata habsburgică. Alături de identitatea națională și de loialitatea dinastică, abordate frecvent în istoriografie, o atenție aparte trebuie să le fie acordată și altor tipuri de loialități sau identități, dezvoltate în contextul integrării în mediul

militar cazon și al însușirii unui cod comportamental bine definit. În acest context, s-au conturat onoarea ofițerească, transformată în identitate militară, dar și alte atașamente, precum cel pentru stat, diferit de loialitatea dinastică, sau cel pentru teritoriu. Nu în ultimul rând, această lucrare se concentrează și asupra modului în care toate aceste identități diferite sunt armonizate în cadrul unor identități multiple, definitorii pentru comportamentul și acțiunile militarilor armatei habsburgice multinaționale.

Cuvinte cheie: armata habsburgică, militari români, identitate militară, identitate supranațională, identități multiple

Over the past decades, historians have continuously approached the subject of identities in search of further explanations regarding certain historical events to which some political, economic, or social causes have already been assigned. In time, the issue of national identity in the Habsburg Monarchy has constantly raised the historians' interest, and the monopoly it brought, especially in the national historiographies of the successor states, diminished the attention given to other types of attachments or loyalties. The Romanian historiography includes many studies on the evolution of the Romanians in the Habsburg Monarchy and the creation of their national identity,¹ but, in the recent years, other types of identities have also been increasingly researched.²

As for the identity construction and assertion, a certain socio-professional group received special attention, given its special status within society – i.e., that of the Romanian officers in the Habsburg army.³ Usually,

¹ Nicolae Bocșan, *Ideea de națiune la românii din Transilvania și Banat (secolul al XIX-lea)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1997); Sorin Mitu, *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001); Liviu Maior, *Habsburgi și români. De la loialitatea dinastică la identitate națională* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006); Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Identitatea românească. Felul de a fi român de-a lungul timpului* (Bucharest: Contemporanul, 2016).

² Selectively: Sorin Mitu, "Transylvanian Romanians and Transylvania's Provincial Identity in the 19th Century," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, Series Historica, Special Issue (2012); Idem, "Local Identities from Transylvania in the Modern Epoch," *Transylvanian Review*, supp. No. 3 (2013); Idem, "Românii ardeleni la începutul secolului al XX-lea. Loialități și identități în schimbare," in *Multiculturalism, identitate și diversitate. Perspective istorice* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2016); Sabina Fati, "Naționalism civic versus naționalism etnic în perioada memorandistă," *Alterra*, X/24 (2004); Luminița Ignat-Coman, *Imagine de sine la românii ardeleni în perioada dualistă* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2009); Cecilia Cârja, Ion Cârja, "On the Eastern Identity of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church in the Second Half of the 19th Century," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, Series Historica, 57 (2012).

³ Selectively: Liviu Maior, *Românii în armata habsburgică. Soldați și Ofițeri uitați* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004); Gabriel Kohn, "Galben-negru până în măduva oaselor și dinastic până la exces". Ultimul secol al ofițerului habsburgic," in Ciprian Vălcău (ed.),

historiography has analyzed the phyllo-dynasticism and the national sentiments exhibited by this category; but beyond these two, however, Romanian officers in the Habsburg army developed other identities dependent on the various contexts of their professional and personal life. The way these identities intertwined raises a research question regarding the behavior of these Romanians who had a special attitude within the national movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. The soldiers can best be associated with the concept of “multiple identities,” which underlies their actions that were often different from those of other Romanians in the monarchy.

The topic, of course, cannot be exhaustively covered in an article, but it is necessary, especially for the Romanian historical writings, to stir up the historiographical discussion on the different identity options of the soldiers; therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze it in its general framework. Thus, it focuses mainly on covering the space between the two extremities more intensely researched by the historiography (i.e., the national identity and the dynastic loyalty), and aims to explore and illustrate various other identity versions of the Romanian officers in the Habsburg army, as well as how they intertwined, generating multiple, overlapping or concurrent identities.

Theoretical framework

The problem of identities has aroused the interest of several categories of researchers, mostly in the fields of sociology, psychology, imagology, philosophy, but also of history. A large number of studies are dedicated to identity construction and other related aspects.⁴ As for the

Splendoarea decadenței. Viena 1848-1938 (Timișoara: Bastion, 2008); Irina Marin, “The Formation and Allegiance of the Romanian Military Elite Originating from the Banat Military Border” (PhD diss., University College London – School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2009); Ionela Zaharia, “Clerul militar din Austro-Ungaria în Marele Război” (PhD diss., Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 2016); Mircea Măran, “Identitate națională, confesională și loialitate dinastică în Regimentul de graniță germano-bănățean nr. 12 (1764–1872),” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu – Series Historica*, 58 (2019); Vlad Popovici, “Officiers et société civile roumaine en Transylvanie (1790–1867),” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, 58/1–4 (2019).

⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in Anthony King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Craig Calhoun, “Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,” in Craig Calhoun (coord.), *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Wiley–Blackwell, 1994); Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1970); Gilles Ferréol (coord.), *Cetățenie și integrare socială* (Bucharest: I. N. I., 1999); Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (Columbia

Romanian researchers who approached this topic, they also cover several fields of Humanities⁵. The process of creating identities is the one that drew the attention of researchers; in time, two main theories were shaped: the substantialist one and the interactionist one.⁶ The supporters of the former stated that the natural characteristics are those that lead to the creation of identities, giving birth to a set of unalterable features. In terms of national identity, these theories speak of the historical predestination, that which decides the belonging of an individual to a nation in advance.⁷ The interactionist theories, however, discuss the social contacts and the psychological, cultural, and historical contexts, which are the determining factors in creating and asserting an identity. Thus, the interactionist theories emphasize the importance of the individual's insertion in certain groups, which triggers the mobilization of cognitive mechanisms according to the socio-political context.⁸

According to the interactionist theories, on which the argument of this study is built, "the identity is not an imminent condition of the individual, a fact that defines him constantly and invariably. It would rather be a posture adopted during an interaction, a possibility, among other things, to organize one's relationships with another [...]"⁹ It

University Press, 2000); Anthony P. Cohen (ed.), *Signifying Identities: Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values* (London-New-York: Routledge, 2000); Gilles Ferréol, Guy Jucquois (coords.), *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale* (Iași: Polirom, 2005); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London-New York: Verso, 2006); Paul du Gay, *Organizing Identity: Persons and Organizations "After Theory"* (Sage Publications, 2007); Charles Westin, José Bastos, Janine Dahinden and Pedro Góis (eds.), *Identity Processes and Dynamics in Multi-Ethnic Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

⁵ Nicoleta Turliuc, "Construcția identității minoritare în condiții de eterogenitate culturală," in Adrian Neculau, Gilles Ferréol (coords.), *Minoritari, marginali, excluși* (Iași: Polirom, 1996); Luminița-Mihaela Iacob, "Imagologia și ipostazele alterității: străini, minoritari, excluși," in *Ibid.*; Alin Gavreliuc, *Mentalitate și societate. Cartografii ale imaginarului identitar din Banatul contemporan* (Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2003); Melinda Mitu, Sorin Mitu, *Ungurii despre români. Nașterea unei imagini etnice* (Iași: Polirom, 2014); Victor Neumann, *Neam, popor sau națiune? Despre identitățile politice europene* (Bucharest: Editura Rao, 2015).

⁶ Gavreliuc, *Mentalitate și societate*, 19.

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁸ Fredrik Barth, "Les groupes ethniques et leurs frontières," in Philippe Poutignat, Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart, Fredrik Barth, Jacqueline Bardolph, *Théories de l'éthnicité* (Paris: PUF, 2008).

⁹ Albert Ogien, "Les usages de l'identité," in *AFA (Association française des Anthropologues), Vers des sociétés pluriculturelles: études comparatives et situation en France* (Ed. De l'ORSTOM), 135.

manifests itself and is identifiable as a result of the multitude and diversity of social contexts. The types of personal identities can be diverse (e.g., being a soldier, being a brother, being a Muslim, being a Transylvanian), each of which designate identities emerged from the professional, family, religious, or regional levels. Collective identities are similar to individual ones and can equate to the feeling of belonging.¹⁰ Each individual has as many identities as feelings of belonging, so there is a plurality of affiliations, either simultaneous or successive. These are located on different levels, each of which must have its elements of categorization and differentiation; depending on the context, one category or another is emphasized.¹¹

Sometimes, as in the case of individuals belonging to one community, and who come into contact with elements belonging to a cultural code of another community, there arises an intra-subjective conflict related to the assumption of two different cultural codes and their harmonization. The management of the intra-subjective conflict is made in different ways; one of them is the creation of a syncretic composite identity.¹² This is the context in which the concept of “multiple identities” was born, the concept that differs from multiculturalism or transculturality “by underlining the denial of the theory of absolute values, and by emphasizing that nothing entitles us to operate hierarchically and exclusively through the terms such as *ethnic, racial, religious, regional, national-racial*.”¹³ Within the same category that includes multiple identities, other identity researchers have also discussed the “concrete universalism”, considered the third way, located in the middle, between abstract universalism and the absolute differentialism.¹⁴

The means of creating concrete universalism are found not in the attempt to eliminate the particular cultures, but in the search for the so-called “cultural universals”, i.e. the constituent elements of each particular culture that would have the potential to develop into principles of universal value.¹⁵ In the case of the ethnic groups in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy that went through the process of nation-building, such “cultural universals” were represented by dynastic loyalty and imperial patriotism,

¹⁰ Gilles Ferréol, Guy Jucquois (coords.), *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale* (Iași: Polirom, 2005), 43–44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 330.

¹² Turliuc, “Construcția identității minoritare,” 58.

¹³ Victor Neumann, *Neam, popor sau națiune? Despre identitățile politice europene* (Bucharest: Rao, 2015), 207.

¹⁴ Michel Giraud, “Etnicitatea ca necesitate și ca obstacol,” in Gilles Ferréol (coord.), *Cetățenie și integrare socială* (Bucharest: I. N. I., 1999), 64–67.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

citizenship, or regionalism. However, there were also references to the so-called “identity opportunism”, regarding the change of identity according to situation, and the transition from an identity group to another, so as to fulfil a pragmatic function.¹⁶

As for the application of this theoretical structure to the particular situation of the Romanian soldiers in the Habsburg army, it is necessary to make a summary of the historical evolution of this professional category. The first substantial enlistments of the Romanians into the Habsburg army took place in the second half of the eighteenth century, on the occasion of the establishment of the border regiments in Transylvania and the Banat. The prospect of liberation from serfdom determined the Romanians in these areas to accept, not without reluctance, the status of border guards (*grăniceri*), which, in time, would become a constituent part of their identity spectrum. The Romanian border guards distinguished themselves as loyal soldiers of the Monarchy. In the decades before the revolution of 1848, Romanians also managed to enter the officers’ corps, even though they were underrepresented compared to other ethnic groups; in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the number of Romanian officers in the Habsburg army was less than 50, most of whom belonged to the border regiments in Transylvania and Banat.¹⁷

Changes in the military system took place in mid-nineteenth century, which directly affected the Romanians. The most important of these was the disbandment of the border regiments (in 1851 in Transylvania and 1872 in Banat), followed by a new legal framework that regulated the organization of the Monarchy’s army, after the Compromise of 1867. The Dualist Monarchy had a common army and navy, subordinated to the common Ministry of War, as well as three national militias (*Landwehr*): Austrian, Hungarian, and Croatian-Slavonic. The Common Army and the *Landwehr* of Cisleithania swore allegiance to the emperor, while the Hungarian and Croatian armies swore allegiance to the king and the constitution. According to the laws of 1868, 80% of the recruits were directed towards the common army, while the remaining 20% were directed towards the territorial armies.¹⁸ Until the end of the First World War, the Romanians were present in the military structures of the

¹⁶ Turliuc, “Construcția identității minoritare,” 58.

¹⁷ Ladislau Gyémánt, *Mișcarea națională a românilor din Transilvania între anii 1790 și 1848* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986), 122, cited in Vlad Popovici, “Officers et société civile,” 42.

¹⁸ István Deak, *Beyond Nationalism. A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (New-York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 56–58.

monarchy, although in a rather small number compared to other nationalities, sometimes standing out in some of the highest positions of the military system.¹⁹

The various situations and contexts in which the Romanian militaries in the Habsburg army found themselves could point towards a somewhat contradictory shaping of their identities; however, by the end of the nineteenth century, they had developed well-defined and, at the same time, harmonized multiple identities, loyalties, and attachments. The constant contact with representatives of other nations, social categories, or regions within the monarchy led them to shape a syncretic identity background, even though in some cases the management of the intra-subjective conflict meant displaying the elements of a single identity – usually the ethnic/national one. This study will focus on how the Romanian militaries in the Habsburg army dealt with the process of harmonizing their multiple identities, in different historical periods and contexts.

The officers' honor and the military identity

The reasons for choosing the military career were diverse, and underwent constant changes from the eighteenth century until World War I. Regarding the establishment of the border regiments and the Romanians' enlistment, a sense of duty or loyalty towards the Empress were undoubtedly less important at the time than the social perspective opened by this decision. From the very beginning of the establishment of the border guards' regiments, the imperial authorities appealed to social and economic measures so as to motivate the future militaries to renounce their servile status.²⁰ The newly militarized were to become free people, bearing financial obligations only to the state. Let aside coercion, this was the first and most powerful motivation for entering the military service; the Romanians who enlisted were driven by social reasons, partly enhanced, in some areas, by their ethnic conflicts with the Saxons. The establishment of border regiments also involved opposition, partly due to the attempts of having the Greek Catholic denomination imposed on them, partly out of a desire to avoid military service constraints;²¹ however, as time went on, the condition of "border guards" was so much assumed by the Romanians, that embracing the military career became a primary professional option for those born in a border guard family. Even after the disbandment of the

¹⁹ Leonida Pop became the general adjutant of Emperor Francis Joseph. Virgil Șotropa, "Soarta maiorului Leon Pop," *Arhiva Someșană*, series I, 14 (1931).

²⁰ Liviu Maior, *Românii în armata habsburgică. Soldați și Ofițeri uitați* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 59.

²¹ Carol Göllner, *Die siebenbürgische Militärgrenze* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1974).

border regiments, many Romanian career officers in the Habsburg army came from areas with a regimental tradition, such as Banat or Năsăud.²²

Starting with the Romanians' first contacts with the military environment, the shaping of a particular identity took place both from within the border regiments and from outside, including imperial policies. The new soldiers were integrated in what used to be called at that time the *military estate*.²³ The term, coined by the imperial authorities, was meant, among other things, to emphasize their condition of free people, similar to that of other free social or privileged categories. Militarization also generated a much more active involvement in civic enterprises at territorial, cultural, ethnic, institutional or social levels. The emergence of this entangled regional, professional and social identity was encouraged, on the one hand by the privileged status bestowed on them by the military regulations, and on the other hand by the self-perception of their social and legal otherness in comparison with the civilians.²⁴ The inhabitants of the border regiments were referred to by a specific term (*grăniceri*), which they still used to define themselves a century after the border regiments' disbandment.²⁵

An example in this regard is provided by Leontin Luchi, in a discourse about the role of the Romanians in Năsăud (the former border guards regiment no. 17), in which he highlights the idea of their superiority among other members of the Romanian nation: "[...] we will be able to raise useful men for the homeland, the nation, and the human society, all the more so as the mountain people of this place are endowed with the best qualities: with a rare aptitude, effort, and energy and many other beautiful natural qualities, so that in this respect they rank first amongst the Transylvanian Romanians."²⁶ The border guards' mentality was

²² Liviu Maior, *România în armata habsburgică*, 47–59. See also Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Bolovan, "Granița militară austriacă și românii din Transilvania în sec. XVIII-XIX (studiu de caz: zona Năsăud)," in Susana Andea (coord.), *Pe urmele trecutului: profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy – Centre for Transylvanian Studies, 2009); Mathias Bernath, "Die Errichtung der Siebenbürgischen Militärgrenze und die Wiener Rumänenpolitik in der frühjosephinischen Zeit," *Sudost-Forschungen*, XIX (1960); Vlad Popovici, "Establishment of the Austrian Military Border in Transylvania and Its Short- and Medium-term Effects," *Povijesni prilozi*, 54 (2018).

²³ Which was not an actual provincial estate with the associated political rights, but it was rather a professional and social denominator.

²⁴ Josef Wolf, "Granița militară din Transilvania și din Banat. O perspectivă comparată," in Ioan-Aurel Pop, Ioan Bolovan (coords.), *Călător prin istorie. Omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy – Centre for Transylvanian Studies, 2010), 101.

²⁵ Ioan Lumperdean, "La longue durée" în mentalitatea și limbajul grănicerilor năsăudeni. Repere economico-sociale și politico-naționale," *Revista Bistriței*, 8 (1994): 144.

²⁶ Iuliu Moisil, "Figuri grănicerești năsăudene," *Arhiva Someșană*, series I, 23 (1938): 496.

characterized by the awareness of their special condition, conferred by the affiliation to a strictly delimited administrative-territorial unit, and supported by rights and freedoms that came along with the military status.²⁷ Such self-defining elements have been perpetuated in the respective area until nowadays, the inhabitants still talking about the “Năsăud pride” (*fala năsăudeană*), defined as “a feeling of superiority over other provincials. It derives from the tradition of the Military Border, and was invoked especially in the critical moments of the community.”²⁸

In order to achieve solidarity between and amongst the young people who joined the army, the *esprit de corps* (i.e., regimental solidarity) was encouraged by a strong attempt to instill love for the regiment, as well as concern for its reputation; the idea of the moral service towards their military unit was induced in the conscience of the young militaries so as to make them consider it to their own benefit. In the case of the regiments too, “imagined communities” of selfless love and solidarity took shape.²⁹ Thus, the border guards’ identity manifested transnationally and even dictated the behavior of Romanians in these military structures on relation with members of other ethnic groups. In 1848, the Romanian battalion of the Năsăud border regiment sent to fight against the Serbs in southern Hungary openly refused to fight against other border guards, “with whom they had fought together under the same royal flags [...]. And the one who works against it will be banished from his homeland and cursed.”³⁰

Moreover, a certain Romanian-Serbian solidarity was born within the border regiments in the Banat, which prevailed even over the dynastic loyalty, as underlined in a letter of a Romanian border guard to a Serbian comrade-in-arms. The sender was writing about the political-administrative status of the border regiment’s area, whose inhabitants were being advised at the time not to demand union with Vojvodina, but to follow the emperor’s decisions: “Behold, brother! Now you see that these people, who simply and miserably lead our Romanian people by the nose with various lies, can no longer live. And, like Judas, who betrayed Christ,

²⁷ Claudia Septimia Sabău, “*Și ne-au făcut din grănițeri, țărani...*”. *Mentalități colective în satele năsăudene foste grănicerești în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2015), 37.

²⁸ Oana-Ramona Ilovan, Ioana Scridon, Kinga Xénia Havadi-Nagy, Dănuț Huciu, “Tracing the Military Frontier District of Năsăud. Territorial Identity and Regional Development,” *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft*, 158 (2016): 231.

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 141–146, cited in David French, *Military Identities. The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870–2000* (New-York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79.

³⁰ Iulian Martian, “Însemnările medicului dr. Ignaț Iancsa,” *Arhiva Someșană*, series I, 14 (1931): 440.

so do these soulless people sell our people first to the Hungarians, and now to the Germans, an even worse enemy, who has sucked the blood of our poor people, and whom we have been serving for centuries. And now think of what can become of us, I see nothing good in spite of all the faith we show to the Austrian Empire, and I think we will remain mere slaves and nothing else.”³¹

The professionalization of the army in the second half of the nineteenth century, the transformation of border regiments into line regiment, and also the clearer shaping of ethnic identities produced changes in the way the military career was perceived by Romanians, including those from the former military border. There were no more “privileged” areas, such as the border regiments, and choosing a military career even became, in some cases, a decision dictated by principles. On the verge of choosing his future career, as in most of the turning points in his life, Octavian Furlugeanu hesitated between two identities. His Romanian parents and grandfather urged him towards a liberal profession which would have allowed him to get involved into the national movement. His grandmother, born into a noble family and representative of a supranational identity, wanted a future for him in the service of the state. In the end, under the influence of the years spent in the company of colleagues of other nationalities in a Hungarian school, Furlugeanu opted for a military career, to the great joy of his grandmother.³²

Even though the military career was not financially attractive, this shortcoming was compensated by the privileged status enjoyed by the officers. The Habsburg monarchy was a militarized state and authorities paid special attention to the army. The imperial propaganda presented officers as role models for the entire population. Military service and the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the defense of the state were considered supreme virtues, and the officers’ code of honor, rooted in the medieval concept of chivalry, was appealing to all educated men.³³ Since the Enlightenment, a pattern of a soldierly morality had been created, and it included national and religious tolerance, loyalty to the throne and homeland, sociability, civility, and a paternal attitude toward subordinates.³⁴ The emperor himself encouraged the perpetuation of the

³¹ Mircea Măran, “Identitate națională, confesională și loialitate dinastică în Regimentul de graniță germano-bănățean nr. 12 (1764-1872),” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie »George Barițiu«* - Series HISTORICA, 58 (2019): 68.

³² Nicolae Bocșan, Valeriu Leu, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană (1914-1919)*, vol. I (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 747-748.

³³ Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 6.

³⁴ Kardos Atilla-Alexandru, “K. u. K. Infanterieregiment “Kaiser Leopold II” - Regimentul de Casă al Aradului” (PhD diss., West University of Timișoara, 2021), 249.

discrepancy between commissioned officers and NCOs and soldiers, bestowing on the formers a privileged status and establishing a social distance between them and all other societal strata. This fueled the officers' self-awareness, encouraging them to perceive themselves as "special" citizens of the empire.³⁵

Military honor thus defined the officers' consciousness, and it was one of the elements that helped maintain their loyalty to the Crown during watershed events such as the Revolution of 1848-1849, or World War I, and even after the death of Francis Joseph, or when the prospects of a victory of the Central Powers became null. As for the Romanians with higher military ranks, the military honor, and wearing the emperor's uniform were of major importance, even after retirement. Nicolae Cena retired in 1904 with the rank of field marshal, the highest ever achieved by a Romanian officer of the Austro-Hungarian army. On 26 July 1914, Cena was arrested by the Hungarian authorities on political suspicion. During this experience, Cena often expressed his deep dissatisfaction with the treatment he received, which was no different from that of other detainees, but also regarding his arrest, which was operated by gendarmes and not by army officers, his transportation being carried out with a car that did he deemed to be beneath him as a retired field marshal. After having been released on 24 August 1914, Cena insisted on being rehabilitated by *Ehrenrat*, a council of honor in front of which he had the opportunity to deny the charges brought against him, thus having his honor fully restored.³⁶

Military honor and the privileged status of the military in the Habsburg Monarchy were both components of the military identity. The elements that contributed to its shaping were promoted by both the authorities and the officers themselves, as a result of the awareness of the special status that such position held within the society. The military identity was embraced in the context of assumed characteristics and principles that gradually came to define the image of the Austro-Hungarian officer. Thus, a pattern was created, which characterized the officer as tolerant and adaptable, loyal, and possessing a strong dynastic patriotism. Some historians have even spoken of the social isolation of the officers' corps; career officers perceived themselves as devoted exclusively to the monarchy, so that, from the perspective of direct loyalty to the dynasty, they showed very little interest in other fields of activity, or

³⁵ Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47.

³⁶ Marin, "The Formation and Allegiance," 237-246.

towards social or political topics.³⁷ However, this political indifference could itself be considered a form of politics, especially because it was accompanied by the veneration of the imperial figure. Therefore, the attitude of the officers is categorized as being associated with imperial patriotism. Especially the officers perceived the imperial idea as pragmatic, tangible, more than abstract – as it was the case of other citizens of the state. The imperial sentiment was part of their *forma mentis*.³⁸

The military identity of the career officers was even stronger in the case of the so-called *Tornisterkinder*, a term that designates officers following their fathers' military careers. Alexander Rosenfeld, known as Roda Roda, described this type of officer as "having no national feelings. He could have been born in the Galician Tarnopolis, or the Riva del Garda: he was Austrian. And he spoke military German [...]." ³⁹ Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of the career officers increased enormously. In 1913, the number of graduates of the military academy within the boundaries of the monarchy whose fathers were not part of the military was merely 25.3%.⁴⁰ The strong dynastic loyalty and military identity of the officers from the so-called regimental families had a major influence on the behavior of these career soldiers during World War I, most of whom fought on behalf of the emperor until the very last day of the monarchy's reign. This was the case of an officer identified in the memoirs of Octavian Furlugeanu under the fictitious name Virgil Coșodeanu; imprisoned in Russia, when asked by other Romanians about his readiness to enlist and join the Romanian army, Coșodeanu flatly refused: "Lieutenant Zăleanu told them that he also had spoken with Captain Coșodeanu, but he cut it short that he 'was, first and foremost, a soldier of the monarchy and he had been born Romanian only by accident'. What else could you expect from the son of a Viennese woman married to a Romanian officer and who then, as a child, was raised in the environment of military high schools, where he had heard nothing but the idolization of the Kaiser and knew no other colors than black-yellow."⁴¹

³⁷ Eugene Lohr Miller Jr., "Politics, the Nationality Problem, and the Habsburg Army, 1848-1914" (LSU Historical Dissertations and Thesis, 1992), 309.

³⁸ Johann Christoph Allmayer-Beck, "Forța armată în stat și societate," in Adam Wandruszka, Peter Urbanitsch și Alois Brusatti (eds.), Rudolf Gräf (coord. of Romanian edition), *Monarhia Habsburgică (1848-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2019), 323-324.

³⁹ Roda Roda, *Roda Rodas Roman*, 269, cited in Tamara Scheer, "Language Diversity and Loyalty in the Habsburg Army," 177-178.

⁴⁰ Nicoleta Hegedús, Csaba Horváth, Vlad Popovici (eds.), *Portrete de ofițeri de origine română din Armata de Honvezi (1868-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2020), 30.

⁴¹ Nicolae Bocșan, Valeriu Leu, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană (1914-1919)*, vol. I (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 777.

Supranational identity

For the Romanians in the Habsburg Monarchy, supranational identity referred to the mixture of dynastic loyalty and state patriotism. Taken separately, each of them is defined by different characteristics; however, in practice, they often functioned like a binomial, their separate identification in primary sources often representing a challenge. The elements that created the premises for the existence of a supranational identity among the soldiers of the Austrian-Hungarian Army are diverse, but the most important was undoubtedly the loyalty to the monarch. Having fallen in love after graduating from the military school, O. Furlugeanu decided to buy a medallion, which was engraved with the text: "My life belongs to the Kaiser and to you, Aranka!"⁴² Thus, for the students of the military schools within the monarchy, the emperor was seen as a demigod, a perception maintained, moreover, through a whole series of measures taken by the authorities in order to shape the career of future officers around the image of the emperor. Francis Joseph inspired loyalty in his subjects in the Austro-Hungarian army through his own behavior. He projected himself as the first member of the joint armed forces, and, towards the end of his life, he appeared in public exclusively in a military uniform.⁴³

Before the generalization of military recruitment and the professionalization of the officer corps, dynastic loyalty was also one of the engines that fueled the militaries' attachment to the imperial idea, despite not having taken the form of an imperial identity in itself. The way in which Vienna tried to gain the loyalty of the Romanians in the border regiments was precisely by appealing to their dynastic loyalty, which already had a consistent basis at the end of the eighteenth century, especially after the reign of Joseph II, who was known amongst Romanians as the "good emperor" (*bunul împărat*).⁴⁴

Maintaining loyalty to the emperor was all the more enhanced by the oath of allegiance, which was a sacred moment in every soldier's life. The oath was of particular importance for the transition of the individual from the status of a mere inhabitant of the monarchy, to that of a citizen and to that of a military man, while it also provided a tool for cultivating discipline and morals. The oath created a personal, direct relationship, as well as an obligation between the subject and the monarch; the state would use this covenant to place the dynastic loyalty above all other ties – even

⁴² Bocșan, Leu, *Marele Război*, 784.

⁴³ Allmayer-Beck, *Forța armată în stat și societate*, 214.

⁴⁴ Alexandru-Bogdan Bud, *Limitele loialității dinastice: Iosif al II-lea și românii din Transilvania în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română-Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2015).

above one's own family ties.⁴⁵ Beyond the fact that it enhanced the loyalty to the emperor, the oath was also intended to create an attachment to the homeland (*Vaterland*). One of the moments that show its importance for the Romanians in the Habsburg army was their refusal to pledge allegiance to the Hungarian constitution during the 1848 revolution.⁴⁶ This moment remained one of major importance in terms of dynastic loyalty for the Romanians, even if they probably also had other, more ethnically entrenched reasons to reject Hungarian law. Loyalty to imperial insignia, such as the emblems on the flag, manifested on the same occasion both by militaries and civilians, confirms the same attitude.⁴⁷

At the same time, instilling imperial patriotism was one of the main goals of the military schools, although achieving it was hampered by several major obstacles, as one of the army's periodicals read in 1911: "While the Germans, the French, and the Italians, who join the army as recruits, usually already consider themselves citizens, and identify with their state, and only need to be trained to become soldiers, recruits join our army every year after they had often already undergone an anti-Austrian, nationalist pre-school, [...] out of this material [...] We need to train citizens who are willing to sacrifice themselves [...], and that is not always possible to accomplish in three years."⁴⁸ In this context, historiography considered that supranational identity could have arisen especially in the case of career officers, who spent their entire lives in the military. For most of them, commitment and oath to the emperor took precedence over any other identity, and, in time, the officers came to be regarded as the guardians of the multinational monarchy.⁴⁹

The national identity

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, Romanian historiography has long preferred to consider the two identity coordinates of the Romanian military in the Habsburg army, i.e. the national one and the supranational one, rather as opposable, or at least as generating

⁴⁵ Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 22.

⁴⁶ György Spira, "Kossuth și grănicerii români reînțorși de pe râul Vág în toamna anului 1848," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj-Napoca*, 41 (2002): 132.

⁴⁷ Dumitru Suci (coord.), *Războiul național din Transilvania de la 1848-1849. Date, realități și fapte reflectate în documente bisericești greco-catolice, 1848-1852* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2014), 132.

⁴⁸ *Danzer's Arme-Zeitung* (12 January 1911): 1, cited in Tamara Scheer, "Language Diversity and Loyalty in the Habsburg Army, 1868-1918" (Habilitation Thesis, University of Vienna, 2020), 104.

⁴⁹ Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 4.

constant tension, sometimes even a tragic one on an individual level (as was the case of Apostol Bologa/Emil Rebreanu).⁵⁰ The exception was given by the border guards' regiments, for which historiography not only accepted, but actually emphasized the mixture between ethnic character, dynastic loyalty and state patriotism. Trying to identify the reasons why national consciousness was always alive among the Năsăud border guards, Iuliu Moisil noted, first of all, the recognition of the Romanians as descendants of Rome by Emperor Joseph II; the fact that all the emperors in Vienna called themselves "Roman emperors" proved that the Habsburg sovereigns were proud of their Romanian subjects. A consequence of this was the development of the national feeling and the national pride of the Romanian border guards.⁵¹ For the period after 1867 however, when most of the Romanians in the monarchy became citizens of Hungary, their national identity was described as conflicting with the idea of Hungarian state; during the First World War, this conflict intensified in the context of the armed confrontations with the Romanians from the Old Kingdom, or even Bessarabia. More recent works have implicitly accepted the complementarity of the two concepts, without analyzing them thoroughly.⁵²

For a large part of the politicians of the Danube monarchy, the national feeling did not exclude the possibility of also manifesting a strong dynastic loyalty. This relationship between the two types of identities was similar in the case of the Romanian militaries in the Habsburg army, whose professional status greatly contributed to the amplification of dynastic loyalty, but against the background of the manifestation of an incipient national consciousness starting with the eighteenth century. Some of the

⁵⁰ Vasile Popeangă, "Voluntari bănățeni în lupta pentru înfăptuirea Marii Uniri," *Ziridava*, XVIII (1993); Vasile Dudaș, *Voluntarii Marii Uniri* (Timișoara: Augusta, 1996); Ioan I. Șerban, *Voluntarii transilvăneni și bucovineni din Rusia în războiul pentru întregirea neamului 1916-1919* (Alba Iulia: Aeternitas, 2003).

⁵¹ Iuliu Moisil, "Conștiința națională și eroismul grănițerilor năsăudeni," *Arhiva Someșană*, series I, 24 (1938): 144.

⁵² Ion Cârja, Lorand L. Madly, Dan-Lucian Vaida, "Din armata austro-ungară în România Mare. Destinul unui ofițer uitat: Albert Porkolab (1880-1920)," in Lönhárt Tamás, Nagy Róbert Miklós, Hunyadi Attila-Gabór (coords.), *Modernizare economică, socială și spirituală în Europa Est-Centrală. In honorem Prof. Univ. Dr. Csucsujá István* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2017); Popovici, "Officiers et société civile;" Ion Cârja, "Și de ne veți uita!" O mărturie inedită de pe frontul italian al Marelui Război: Memoriile lui Ion Leuco," in Eva Mârza, Karol Hollý, Radu Mârza (ed.), *Anul 1918 - anul speranței: lucrările celei de-a XIII-a reuniuni a Comisiei de Istorie Româno-Slovace: Alba Iulia, 15-18 octombrie 1918* (Alba-Iulia - Cluj-Napoca: Editura Muzeului Național al Unirii - Mega, 2020); Kardos Atilla-Alexandru, "K. U. K. Infanterieregiment "Kaiser Leopold II" - Regimentul de Casă al Aradului" (PhD diss., Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara, 2021).

Romanian career officers in the Habsburg army were involved in nationalist activities both before and after retiring from the army, although most of them preferred the cultural or the religious sphere.

Thus, the Romanian militaries and officers in the border regiments were actively involved in the Romanian petitionist movement starting with the end of the eighteenth century, in close connection with the confessional structures of the time. A memorandum of December 1790, addressed to Emperor Leopold II, was written by Ioan Para, chaplain of the border regiment No. 17 (2 Romanian) in Năsăud. The content of the act remains closely linked to the framework of dynastic loyalty, argued through the multiple military and human efforts made by the Romanian officers, on the basis of which the politico-national demands were expressed: "the Romanians were faithful to the House of Austria from the very beginning, as they are today ready to die and shed their blood for its glory."⁵³ A year later, Ioan Para was among those signing *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, a petition claiming the recognition of a Romanian "political nation" (i.e., political estate) in Transylvania. These petitions are closely linked to the concept of dynastic loyalty, since the recipient was, in most cases, the emperor himself. Furthermore, according to sociologists, petitionism, associated with protest, is one of the manifesting forms of loyalism, its alternative being either indifference or abandonment.⁵⁴

The mobilization of border guards during the events of 1848 is another example of the interweaving and mutual instrumentation of national identity and dynastic loyalty. The involvement of the Romanian peasants of the border regiments in the Revolution of 1848 was enhanced by the nationalist elites who addressed social demands with national resonance. Along with the social demands of the revolutionary programs, the appeal to loyalty towards the emperor was a decisive and influential component of the elites' discourse, complemented and reinforced by the appeal to national sentiments coming from the Imperial Court in search of provincial allies.⁵⁵ In the period between 1848 and 1849, the political involvement of the Romanian officers of the border regiments is also relevant, as they themselves were elected or promoted as representatives of their compatriots in relation to the authorities.⁵⁶

⁵³ David Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum. Din istoria formării națiunii române* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984), 47–49, cited in Popovici, "Officiers et société civile," 41.

⁵⁴ Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁵⁵ Sorin Mitu, "Mobilizare politică și naționalism la Năsăud, în vara lui 1848," *Arhiva Someșană*, Series III (2004): 36–40.

⁵⁶ Popovici, "Officiers et société civile," 43–44.

The revolution of 1848 marked the end of the political involvement of the Austrian army officers. However, the national activity continued in the educational and social spheres; after the dissolution of the military frontier, the officers got involved in the Romanian civil society in Transylvania and Hungary. During the administrative reorganization of the former military border, retired militaries played an active part, as proved by the correspondence between George Pop and Ioachim Mureșan, in which Pop describes Năsăud as an “Eldorado of the Romanians”, stating that: “the organization of the district fulfilled all my desires.”⁵⁷ Also, in Regiment no. 16 (1st Romanian) in Orlat, the Mounting Fund was transformed in 1863 into a School Fund managed by former border guards’ officers (e.g., Constantin Stezar, Paul Străulea, Dionisie Drăgoi, Vasile Stanciu or Colonel David Urs de Margina).⁵⁸ In the 1860s, some of the Romanian border guards’ officers became members of different Romanian cultural associations, such as ASTRA or the Arad National Association, others contributing to their development through donations (Traian Doda or George Popa). These actions were accompanied by letters with a strong nationalist character: “our greetings welcome and accompany all your enterprises that strive for brilliance and for a great future, worthy of our brilliant ancestors.”⁵⁹ In fact, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the former Romanian border guards who had retired from military activity, as well as the still-active career officers became involved in a plethora of charitable activities for the Romanian society as reported by the press of the time.⁶⁰

However, the extent to which the national and the imperial identities could truly coexist became visible in moments of crisis, which overlapped with the growing nationalist radicalization of the dualist period. Even if, to a large extent, the Romanian career officers maintained their loyalty to the emperor and the monarchy until its collapse, either as a result of a genuine imperial patriotism or as a result of the code of honor,

⁵⁷ Adrian Onofreiu, “Corespondența dintre Vasile Neacșu, Ioachim Mureșan și George Pop (1861-1866),” *Arhiva Someșană*, Series III (2004): 450.

⁵⁸ Popovici, “Officers et société civile,” 44-47.

⁵⁹ Ioan Bolovan, “Asociația națională Arădeană pentru cultura poporului român (1863-1918): între local și regional,” in Liviu Maior (coord.), *Asociaționism și naționalism cultural în secolele XIX-XX. Lucrările Conferinței internaționale Asociaționism și naționalism cultural - 150 de ani de la întemeierea ASTREI, Cluj-Napoca, 22-24 septembrie 2011* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy - Centre for Transylvanian Studies, 2011), 84-85, cited in Popovici, “Officers et société civile,” 49-50.

⁶⁰ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, No. 27 (April 18/6, 1868): 110; *Ibid.*, No. 40 (June 1/May 20, 1879): 4; *Ibid.*, No. 46 (April 21/May 3, 1881): 3; *Ibid.*, No. 47 (April 23/May 5, 1881): 4; *Ibid.*, No. 25 (February 2/14, 1895): 3; *Ibid.*, No. 257 (November 19/December 1, 1895): 3; *Ibid.*, No. 40 (February 21/March 6, 1907): 3; *Ibid.*, No. 51 (March 5/18, 1913): 3.

which forbade the violation of an oath, there were also exceptions in which they chose to act according to their Romanian national identity. Such cases were present from the very beginning of the dualist political system. The evolution of Captain Nichita Ignat is relevant in terms of the negative effects of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 on the dynastic loyalty of the Romanians. Born in Salva, in 1829, in a regimental family, Nichita Ignat followed in his father's footsteps – he became an officer and was wounded in the battle of Custoza in 1866. A year later, in the context of the Compromise, his loyalty and allegiance to the House of Habsburgs were severely affected, so he would increasingly consider the option of desertion in order to join the Romanian Army. In 1868, Ignat joined the Romanian army with the rank of captain; in 1877 he received Romanian citizenship, and also played an active role in the Russian-Romanian-Turkish War of 1877-1878 (the War for Independence in Romanian historiography).⁶¹ He was not the only former Habsburg officer who fought in the Romanian army in 1877-1878: Captain Moise Groza also chose the same path, and later became a general in the Romanian Army.⁶²

During World War I, the desertion of Lieutenant Octavian Furlugeanu is just one of the many cases that prove the strong impact of the war on the loyalty of Romanians. Furlugeanu distinguished himself as a full-fledged officer dedicated to the Austro-Hungarian cause before the outbreak of the war; however, when he was taken prisoner in Russia, he chose to desert and joined the struggle for the unification of all Romanians in a nation-state. Although he did not seem to be visibly affected, Furlugeanu always found himself in the position of having to make life choices according to his supranational or to his national identity – the previously mentioned episode of choosing his professional career is conclusive in this respect. By following the “call” of his supranational identity, he later confessed that he had often reconsidered the extent to which his decision had been the right one. On his first return home from military school, he felt guilty about leaving his hometown, remembering his grandfather's desire for him to become a cattle breeder, not a military man, saying to himself: “Maybe Father Irimia was right!”⁶³

Furlugeanu's episodes of turmoil, following his fall into Russian captivity, are illustrative for the struggle between his two identities, as he was unable to harmonize his imperial and national identities. After he

⁶¹ Ioan Cernucan, “Contemporani ai Războiului pentru Independență: maiorul Nichita Ignat din Salva și învățătorul bărgăuan Ilarion Bozga,” *Arhiva Someșană*, 31 (1977): 47.

⁶² Liviu Maior, *Habsburgii și români. De la loialitatea dinastică la identitate națională* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006), 112.

⁶³ Bocșan, Leu, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană*, vol. I, 748.

arrived in Russia, he had his first contact with those who had voluntarily left the Austro-Hungarian army in order to join the national armies: "they were volunteers of the so-called nations, former Austro-Hungarian soldiers, and now recruiting new elements for their legions [...]. Towards them, those who had nothing in common with them and who could not understand the voice of the blood could only show contempt [...] Zeno (i.e., the *persona* of the narrator, Furlugeanu) was among those who blamed these volunteers."⁶⁴ Later, the news about Romania's entry into war triggered a strong internal conflict: "His Romanian nature fought with the emperor's soldier inside him [...]".⁶⁵ As a result, on 8 June 1917, Octavian Furlugeanu took the oath of allegiance to Romania. Furlugeanu's relationship to the Habsburg dynasty changed completely, as the attachment to the Romanian royal family increased.⁶⁶ Furlugeanu's identity journey and the transition from a supranational to a national identity, as well as other cases, such as that of Moise Groza, Ioan Dragalina, or Traian Moșoiu, remained nevertheless exceptions, or rarely made choices at best, within the Habsburg officers' corps. For the most part, the national identity of the Romanian military in the Habsburg army developed in a complementary relationship with the dynastic loyalism, especially due to the fact that before the outbreak of World War I the prospect of creating a Romanian nation-state had seemed far-fetched, at best.

In the case of reserve officers, however, things were completely different, especially during the war, because, for them, nationality was often the main side of the identity spectrum, rooted in their everyday experience before the war. Most of the reserve officers belonged to the category of intellectuals, many of whom acted, both before and after the mobilization, as radical nationalists, who saw the collapse of the monarchy as the only way to achieve their national-political ideal.⁶⁷ Habsburg military authorities constantly tried to find ways of attracting representatives of the nationalities among the reserve officers' corps, but with limited success. The arguments that were most often used for enlistment as reserve officers were not loyalty to the state or dynasty, but the opportunity to avoid the many years of training as a simple soldier. Most often, the future reservist officers joined the army having already clearly aligned themselves with a political creed, being intensely "politicized", since some of them were even active in the national movements.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid., 772-773.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 782.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Kohn, "Galben-negru până în măduva oaselor și dinastic până la exces," 41.

⁶⁸ Scheer, "Language Diversity and Loyalty in the Habsburg Army," 147.

Beyond the nationalist feelings of reserve officers, other causes that prevented their real integration into the military system were of social origin. The cases of Ion Curița and George Iuga are relevant for this situation, as they exhibited, at the end of the nineteenth century, a deep lack of interest for the military career; the official military reports recorded the involutions of the two, and in the case of Iuga, in 1888, it is even mentioned that “he did not have a stable income corresponding to the status of officer, and does not have any adequate social position.”⁶⁹ Ioan Curița’s disinterest in the military career features an interesting mixture of social and national-political factors: the social gap between him and his fellow officers might have generated a nationalist radicalization. In 1893 he was to cross the mountains to Romania, at a time of great significance for the Romanian national movement in Transylvania: the failure of the Memorandum action.⁷⁰ Both Curița and Iuga shared a social status that was beneath the one required by the officers’ standing, as well as a lack of prospects for promotion, which prevented them from assuming a military identity. This fact led to the channeling of attachments, at least in the case of Curița, in the direction of the national identity.⁷¹

The regional identity

Despite the assertion of identities that dictated different modes of action both before and during the war, the career officers, the reserve officers, and the Romanian soldiers in the Habsburg army shared a certain type of identity: the territorial one. In their discourses, Transylvania or Banat held an extremely important place, and the desire to defend these territories, regardless of the enemy they were fighting, was strongly expressed. Beyond their attachment to the province from which they came, a certain micro-regional identity also existed. The best-known example refers to the aforementioned “pride of Năsăud” (*fala năsăudeană*), which was an important element of the micro-regional identity.⁷² The legal character of the territories on which this type of identity was built also had a say in these identity games. For the most part, the territorial attachment was born in relation to regions with an explicit autonomous administrative organization, such as, for example, the territory of Transylvania until 1867, or that of the border regiments until their dissolution in the second half of

⁶⁹ Hegedűs, Horváth, Popovici, *Portrete de ofițeri*, 48.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 77–78.

⁷² Claudia Septimia Sabău, “Și ne-au făcut din grănițeri, țărani...”. *Mentalități colective în satele năsăudene foste grănicerești în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2015), 37.

the nineteenth century. However, with the loss of the legal political standing of these territories, the identities created in relation to them continued to exist, and some of them are still exhibited today by the inhabitants of the respective areas.

The regional identity of the militaries at war appears to be different from that during peacetime. The attachment to the native region was not political, but rather involved a series of feelings associated with alienation, longing for family, remembrance of happy moments spent in one's homeland, all of which had been felt prior to the outbreak of the war. In such a context, Octavian Furlugeanu expressed his nostalgia and attachment to the territory of Banat; wounded in the war, during one of his nights in the hospital, he heard a clarinet singing a folk song from the Banat: "that night, Zeno was no longer in the cursed land of Pripet, but in his beloved Banat."⁷³

Multiple identities

For the most part, in terms of the intensity of national or territorial attachments, there was no noticeable difference between the militaries who remained loyal to the monarchy until its disintegration and those who chose to desert. The identities were the same, but the way they were expressed was different. An analysis of the reasons for this difference reveals a series of explanations that can be brought to discussion and which open a research direction approached by recent historiography: the topic of multiple identities. The vast majority of Romanian career officers in the Habsburg army were characterized by multiple identities, assuming different affiliations, sometimes seemingly opposable, but harmonized so that none of them prevailed over the others in an overwhelming ratio. The process of outlining the multiple identities of the Romanian militaries began with the foundation of the border regiments. According to an obituary published in the "The Romanian Telegraph" (*Telegraful Român*), following the death of retired captain Constantin Stezar: "a certain type of men disappears from among us, men who fought with swords in their hands for half of their lives for the glorification of their beloved homeland, while for the other half they sacrificed themselves in cultural work in the field of national culture."⁷⁴

The military careers, the political activity, and the civic involvement of the militaries and officers of the border regiments are an example of the harmonization of identities, which were intertwined and mutually supportive: the ethnic identity, the military identity, the regional identity (a

⁷³ Bocșan, Leu, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană*, vol. I, 766.

⁷⁴ *Telegraful Român*, No. 113 (20 October 1909).

result of the military one), and the dynastic loyalty. It is highly debatable whether in the case of these soldiers we can talk about the intrasubjective conflict that led to the harmonization of several different cultural codes. Prior to the professionalization of the army, of the political class, and before more clearly defined identities and roles took shape, multiple identities formed a rather singular identity, in which there was a homogenization of all elements that would later become components of different identity attachments.

The harmonization of all the identities within a one single multiple identity became both necessary and more difficult in the 1860s. On the one hand, during this period, the modern Romanian state was born, and it exerted a strong influence upon the imaginary of the Romanians in the monarchy; on the other hand, the shock of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise was even stronger for the Transylvanian Romanians, who, in 1867, were to lose their “homeland”; starting with that moment, they needed to channel such loyalties into another direction. These events led to awareness of identities, but at the same time to the triggering of the aforementioned internal conflict, which was managed in two ways: either by giving priority and sometimes even exclusivity to the national identity, or by identity harmonization within the multiple identities, the military and the imperial identity being ranked equal with the national or religious identities.

Dimitrie Burdea was one of the officers of the 33rd Arad Regiment who assumed such an identity, accepted as such by the whole society, as it appeared in the press of different nationalities: he was considered a “friend of the Hungarians” by the Hungarian press, but also a “good Romanian” by the Romanian one.⁷⁵ Burdea’s multiple identities included his national identity; he publicly asserted his identity as a Romanian, both in terms of private and professional life, being considered one of the “leading local Romanian soldiers and civilians.”⁷⁶ The national identity of these officers remained a constituent element of their affiliation to the monarchy, and not an engine of irredentist policies. Especially for the military elites of the empire, the center of gravity was represented by Vienna and the emperor, and not by Bucharest or the Romanian Kingdom.⁷⁷

Regarding the attitudes of the Romanians in the Dualist Monarchy in the context of the War of 1877-1878, Traian Doda’s case is relevant. Back in 1868-1869, Doda tried, through diplomatic correspondence, to contribute

⁷⁵ *Budapesti Hírlap*, No. 291 (1899): 7; *Tribuna poporului*, No. 199 (1899): 2, cited in Kardos Atilla-Alexandru, “K. U. K. Infanterieregiment “Kaiser Leopold II”,” 264.

⁷⁶ Kardos Atilla-Alexandru, “K. U. K. Infanterieregiment “Kaiser Leopold II”,” 252-265.

⁷⁷ Marin, “The Formation and Allegiance of the Romanian Military Elite,” 29.

to the organization of the Romanian army, intending to travel to Romania, along with colonel David Urs de Mărgineni. His request was rejected at the time by Ion C. Brătianu, and a second request was rejected in the autumn of 1876. However, in 1877, in the context of the Russian-Romanian-Turkish War, Brătianu decided to officially request the help of several Romanian generals in the Austro-Hungarian army to organize the war efforts.⁷⁸ It was now Doda's turn to refuse, arguing that "it is impossible for me to commit myself to such serious matter, full of such responsibility, on the eve of the event, ignorant of the means available and without having the time to examine and possibly amend or replace them."⁷⁹ Although, in the end, he agreed to join the Romanian army, Doda never departed for Romania, because of the emperor's rejection of Brătianu's request.⁸⁰

For the Romanian militaries in the Habsburg army, World War I was the final test of their identities and loyalties. Most of them kept their oath, showing loyalty to the monarch and the state. At the same time, they were aware of their national identity, being involved in various nationalist, cultural, social, or religious actions before and during the war. They fought on the side of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as its citizens, and after the dissolution of the state, they contributed to the formation of national guards and the process of unification between Transylvania, Bukovina and the Kingdom of Romania. Many of them continued their military career in the Romanian Army.

As for the officers who eventually chose to desert after Romania entered the war in 1916, their national and imperial loyalties came into conflict. The soldiers did not consider the option of harmonizing them, so one had to prevail, as in the case of Octavian Furlugeanu: throughout his life, he was always forced to choose between his imperial and his national identity. Until the moment of desertion, his actions were directed by his supranational identity, confessing that he had become estranged from his birthplace and family.⁸¹ Later, he completely abandoned his imperial identity and his dynastic loyalty, embracing the national ones: "I opened my eyes and all the formulas in which I had been immersed in military school disappeared from me [...] it is the divine commandment of the blood."⁸² Furlugeanu's case is not an isolated one, as proven by the tens of thousands

⁷⁸ Ibid., 283–286.

⁷⁹ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale ale României, Fond Familial Brătianu, No. 1286, File 21/1877, p. 87–92, cited in Marin, "The Formation and Allegiance," 282.

⁸⁰ Liviu Maior, *Transilvania și Războiul pentru Independență (1877-1878)* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1977), 28–29.

⁸¹ Bocșan, Leu, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană*, vol. I, 748.

⁸² Ibid., 776.

of Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian army enlisted in volunteer corps formed amongst the prisoners in Russia⁸³, Italy⁸⁴ or France.⁸⁵

The assumption of multiple identities was the opposite of Furlugeanu's behavior. For the officers who remained in the Austrian-Hungarian Army until its disintegration, the national identity outlined within the monarchy was complementary with the dynastic loyalty.⁸⁶ The direction that best characterizes the nationalist views of these officers is a moderate one. In the case of the career officers in the Habsburg army, the Romanian national identity was manifested almost exclusively at the cultural level, not implying a commitment within an irredentist policy.⁸⁷ After the disintegration of the empire, this situation changed in some cases. Ioan Boeriu was responsible for organizing the Romanian troops from the former Habsburg army, and later, in February 1919, through the Sibiu Military Command, he began the formation of a Transylvanian army.⁸⁸

After the war, some former Romanian Habsburg officers entered politics, partly following the model of the Old Kingdom's high officers. Gheorghe Domășneanu became the mayor of Timișoara as a member of the National Peasant Party. Colonel Romulus Boldea founded the Christian National Party, which was to merge with Goga's agrarians and with A. C. Cuza's League.⁸⁹ Other Habsburg officers, who became Romanian army officers after 1918, maintained the pre-eminence of the military identity and the spirit of officer's honor. Medical Colonel Victor Corbu resigned from the Romanian Army in 1921, after being jumped on the promotion list by another officer, related to the Brătianu family, despite passing the exam for the rank of General.⁹⁰

It was not only the career officers who upheld their oaths when leaving the front, thus proving the assumption of multiple identities. Some

⁸³ Ioana Rustoiu, Marius Cristea, Smaranda Cutean, Tudor Roșu (eds.), *Legiunea Română din Siberia*, vol. I and II (Alba Iulia: Muzeul Național al Unirii Alba-Iulia, Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2021).

⁸⁴ Vasile Dudaș, "Legiunea română din Italia," in Antonio Faur, Radu Românașu (coords.), *Perseverență și devoțiune în căutarea adevărului istoric. Omagiu profesorului și istoricului Viorel Faur la împlinirea vârstei de 75 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy - Centre for Transylvanian Studies, 2016).

⁸⁵ Vasile Dudaș, *Legiunea română din Franța (1918-1919)* (Timișoara: Mirton, 1996).

⁸⁶ John Paul Newman, "Shades of Empire. Austro-Hungarian Officers, Frankists, and the Afterlives of Austria-Hungary in Croatia, 1918-1929," in Paul Miller, Claire Morelon (eds.), *Embers of Empire: Continuity and Rupture in the Habsburg Successor States after 1918* (New-York - Oxford: Berghahn Books), 160.

⁸⁷ Irina Marin, "The Formation and Allegiance of the Romanian Military Elite," 28.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁹⁰ Florea Marin, *Medicii și Marea Unirea* (Târgu Mureș: Tipomur, 1993), 38-39.

reserve officers remained attached to the imperial cause, despite their active involvement in the national movement. It was the case of Lieutenant Iuliu Maniu, one of the main Romanian political leaders of the time, who, in the autumn of 1918, used his troops to protect the Viennese government, as a last fulfillment of his imperial duty before returning to Transylvania where he organized the Union with Romania.⁹¹ Last but not least, behaviors specific to multiple identities can also be identified among ordinary soldiers. Immediately after enlisting in the war, Horațiu C. Deacu exclaimed: “we are leaving with a strong faith in God and firmly determined to fight for the honor of our homeland, regiment, and people.”⁹²

However, the issue of multiple identities cannot be brought to discussion without mentioning another explanation that could justify the actions of the officers and soldiers who remained loyal to the monarchy until its disintegration, later being present in either the Romanian Army or the Romanian politics. To some extent, multiple identities could be associated with the idea of conjunctural or pragmatic loyalty. The extent to which these two notions are mutually exclusive or complementary to one another remains an open topic; it can be discussed the case of Albert Porkolab, an officer in the k.u.k. Regiment no. 63 in Bistrița, who, after the war, continued his military career in Greater Romania. Among the arguments he mentioned in order to prove his attachment to the Romanian nation, he identifies himself as being of “Romanian origin”, and also describes his previous life, inside the empire as follows: “only Romanian was spoken at my home and that is how I grew up”; “I graduated from Romanian schools”. Porkolab also signed a statement assuring the Romanian military authorities that he was renouncing any foreign “subjection”. At the same time, after the disintegration of the empire, he changed the spelling of his name from Porkolab to Porcolab.⁹³

In reality, Porkolab cannot be categorically associated with any of the three main nationalities of Transylvania, and it features in the historiography as an example of multiple identities.⁹⁴ In his case, but also in that of many other former career officers, the pragmatic reasons for joining the Habsburg army, respectively the Romanian Royal Army, should not be overlooked. Thus, along with a real attachment to the imperial idea, to the

⁹¹ Friedrich Funder, *Vom Gestern ins Heute: aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik* (Vienna: Herold, 1972), 535, 586, cited in Marin, “K.u.K. Officers of Romanian Nationality Before and After the Great War,” in Miller, Morelon (eds.), *Embers of Empire*, 147.

⁹² Horațiu C. Deacu, *Ziarul unui erou. Însemnări făcute pe câmpul de luptă din Galiția, între 12 august-21 octombrie 1914, ziua în care autorul a fost ucis de un glonte dușman* (Gherla: Tipografia Augustin S. Deacu, 1930), 14.

⁹³ Cârja, Madly, Vaida, “Din armata austro-ungară în România Mare,” 139–144.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

dynasty, or nationality, the awareness of and the will to perpetuate their privileged professional status may also lie behind the actions of these officers there. As I mentioned before, to the extent that multiple identities and conjunctural loyalty can be viewed as opposable, they can also be perceived as complementary, especially in the case of officers who chose to fight in the Monarchy until its collapse, even at the moment when the victory of the Entente had become certain.

Conclusions

Although the imperial and the national identity have often been perceived in the historiography of the successor states as being fully opposable, especially in terms of the political views of radical nationalists, for a large part of the Romanian militaries in the Habsburg army a harmonization of sentiments generated by these identities became possible, and as a result, nationality became a complementary part of the state identity. The concept that best characterizes this type of attitude is that of "multiple identities", according to which the identity spectrum of a person could include some seemingly opposite coordinates, which, dosed according to experience and education, have become complementary fragments of a whole, characterized by tolerance and diversity. The existence of multiple identities (the dynastic loyalty, the Austro-Hungarian or the Hungarian state identity, the provincial identity, the national identity, the professional identity) is one of the answers to the questions regarding the reasons why some of the Romanian militaries in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy maintained their loyalty even after the death of Francis Joseph or after Romania entered the World War I. This explains why only after its disintegration did they join their efforts to organize the actions that eventually led to the union of December 1, 1918, but also to its subsequent consolidation.

At the same time, another type of behavior that could be explained by the existence of multiple identities was that of the career officers of Romanian origin (especially those integrated into the *Honvéd*), who, after the disintegration of the monarchy, chose to continue their lives and even their military careers in Hungary.⁹⁵ Not to be neglected, in terms of the attitudes of these soldiers, are the practical reasons behind them, which can be seen both as elements that exclude the possibility of multiple identities, and as ones that make this type of identities complete. Common in terms of the identity of the militaries, whether career officers, reservists or ordinary soldiers, was the attachment to the territory of Transylvania and other micro-regions within it, which became even more important in the context

⁹⁵ Hegedűs, Horváth, Popovici, *Portrete de ofițeri*, 71–72.

of the war. Both the continuation of the fight with the Austro-Hungarian army and the option of desertion came with the idea of returning to Transylvania.

The identities of the Romanian militaries in the Habsburg army were shaped under the strong influence of the special social and professional status of the officers. Along with the forms of identity mainly discussed by historiography (i.e., the national identity and the dynastic loyalty), a military professional identity also existed, which strongly influenced their actions and personal choices. The harmonization of these multiple identities took place gradually. Paradoxically, however, it occurred at the same time and pace as the process of the increasingly clear delineation of each individual identity, under the influence of the increasing radicalization of political life in the monarchy at the beginning of the twentieth century. As a result, at the moment of choice during or at the end of the First World War, a diverse and harmonized multi-identity complex often manifested, traces of which continued to surface in the decades that followed among the citizens of the monarchy's successor states.

