



TURKISH NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

TÜRKİYE-ROMANIA JOINT MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

PROCEEDINGS
8-9 MAY 2023 İSTANBUL

Editors

Bünyamin KOCAOĞLU
Ahmet TAŞDEMİR

TURKISH NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
FATİH INSTITUTE OF MILITARY HISTORY STUDIES

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Graphic Design

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Book Cover Design

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Cover

An Ottoman map from 1898, illustrating the
Ottoman territories and neighboring countries:
Ali Şeref Paşa, *Tasîlât-ı Vilâyet-i Şâhâne*,
(Dersaadet: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1314)

Publisher

Turkish National Defense University
Department of Library and Documentation
Central Printing and Publishing House
Yenilevent/İstanbul

ISBN: 978-625-7791-56-4

İstanbul 2023

PREFACE

Fatih Institute of Military History Studies was founded in 2017 under the Turkish National Defense University with the primary mission of coordinating and advancing studies endeavors within the realm of military history. As part of its commitment, the Institute has organized a series of noteworthy academic events and produced various publications, such as “War and Peace: Treaty of Passarowitz Symposium on the 300th Anniversary”, “Tsarist Russia and the Straits: Turkish-Russian Joint Military History Symposium”, “Türkiye-Italy Joint Military History Symposium”, “Turkish Military Education and Training Symposium” and “Turkish War Industry History Symposium”.

Fatih Institute of Military Military History Studies organized its fourth international joint military history symposium under the title “Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium”. This event was conducted in partnership with the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) and the Romanian Ministry of National Defense-Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History. This symposium was designed to shed light on the study of Turkish and Romanian military history within a broader historical context, with a particular emphasis on their shared historical heritage and channeling them into the realm of academic discourse.

This volume comprises the papers presented at the symposium. Within the pages of this work, a comprehensive exploration of the military interactions between Türkiye and Romania spanning from the 13th century to World War II, and some significant military advancements in Romania, interpreted through the eyes of both Turkish and Romanian historians.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Erhan Afyoncu, the Rector of the Turkish National Defense University, for his gracious patronage and unwavering support in this symposium. Our sincere appreciation also goes to Prof. Dr. Gültekin Yıldız and our collaborative partners: Prof. Dr. Muzaffer Şeker, the President of the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA), and Dr. Carmen-Sorina Rijnoveanu, the Director of the Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History, for their invaluable contributions to the organization and successful execution of the symposium. Finally, it is a pleasure for me to express our gratitude to the personnel of the Fatih Institute

of Military History Studies and our esteemed colleagues from both Turkish and Romanian academic communities who actively participated in the symposium, thereby playing a pivotal role in its organization and the subsequent publication of this comprehensive volume.

Prof. Dr. B nyamin Kocaoglu
October 2023

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MILITARY ACTIVITIES OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE IN ROMANIA: 1241 MONGOL WESTERN CAMPAIGN

Perihan KARADEMİR*

Abstract

The Western campaign of the Mongols in 1241, including the Romanian geography, was one of the most important campaigns of the Mongolian Empire. This campaign had a wide impact on Central Europe, especially today's Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Romania, Germany, Serbia, and Bulgaria. A part of the campaign took place in today's Romanian territory, between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Mongolian Empire. The Mongolian army arrived in Galicia with its total force; it was divided into three in Galicia. The third part of the army, commanded by Kadan and Buri, passed through the Borgó Pass in the Carpathian Mountains and carried out military activities in the Transylvania region. Another army unit of the third army under the command of Buchek passed through the Oituz Pass and the Carpathian arc and conducted military activities in the southeast of Romania. This army unit moved towards Banat during the war. The main goal of the Mongols in Romania was to capture the Hungarian Kingdom, the most important and powerful kingdom of Central Europe at that time. In this regard, the Mongolian army was separated for different targets in different regions in Romania. This paper discusses the Mongolian military activities in Romania during the 1241 Western campaign.

Keywords: Batu, Hungarian Kingdom, Mongolians, Romania, Transylvania, Western Campaign of 1241.

Introduction

This paper was prepared to provide information about the military activities of the 1241 Western campaign in Romania, which was organized by the Mongols to ensure complete domination in the geography of Dasht-

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i Kipchak (the Qipchaq Steppe). This research is based on primary and secondary sources that provide information about the 1241 Western campaign. The Eastern primary sources such as *The Secret History of the Mongols*, the oldest source written in Mongolian about the military activities of the Mongols, and Jami'u 't- *Tawarikh* which was written by Rashiduddin Fazlullah and includes detailed information about the Western campaign of the Mongols according to the sources of his period, will be evaluated.

On the other hand, the Western primary sources, such as *Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament Upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars* written by Master Roger, who personally contacted the Mongols and provided valuable information and *History of the Bishop of Salona and Split* written by Thomas of Split will be analyzed. The general framework of the 1241 campaign in Romania will be drawn within the context of these sources. When examining the available sources, it is noticeable that the information about the activities of the army, especially in Romania, is quite limited. In addition to the information provided by the Eastern and Western sources, this study also delves into the academic works produced by experts in the field such as Denis Sinor, Tudor Salagean, Alexandru Madgearu, Victor Spinei, Stephen Pow, and Altay Tayfun Özcan to establish a comprehensive understanding of the Mongol military activities.

The first part of this research will focus on the situation of the Mongols before the 1241 expedition. The second part will be on the situation of the Cumans within the Hungarian Kingdom before the campaign and the political and military measures taken by the Hungarian Kingdom against the Mongols. Subsequently, the campaign's commencement, decision-making processes, motivations, and leadership will be investigated. Then, the activities in Romania, particular emphasis will be placed on the unfolding events, including the initiation of the third army's Transylvanian campaign, the resistance faced by the third army in Rodna, the subsequent capture of Rodna, the offensive of the third army, and the capture of the region through the deployment of multiple columns under distinct commanders. Finally, the last part of the study will deal with the evaluation of the Mongolian armies in terms of military history.

1. The situation of the Mongols before the 1241 Campaign

The Western expedition of the Mongols, which started during the reign of Genghis Khan, also continued during the reign of Ögedei. With the decision taken at the congress held in Karakorum in 1235, the Mongol army prepared for the Western expedition all present and correct. As a result of the decision taken in the congress, Batu was appointed as the commander-in-chief of the Western campaign, and Subutay, an experienced commander who achieved many military successes during the reign of Genghis Khan, was appointed as an underkeeper. In addition, all Mongolian nobles attended the expedition. According to the information in the Secret History of the Mongols, Ögeday Khan ordered all the princes who were shareholders in the administration of the nation, their eldest sons and the princes, division commanders, majors, captains and corporals and their eldest sons who were not shareholders in the administration of the nation to send them to the campaign.¹ The campaign, which was planned by the Mongols in line with strategic objectives, started in 1236 and by the end of 1240, the Mongolian forces reached the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary.

In 1240, the Mongols captured Kiev, one of the religious and economic strategic regions of Eastern Europe, and then the Galicia Volhynia Principality. For the next military campaign, Batu deployed his army in Galicia. Batu's strategic military plans after Galicia were to dominate the Kingdom of Hungary.

King Béla, the son of Andre of the Arpad Dynasty ruled the Hungarian Kingdom. It was the most powerful kingdom of Central Europe politically and militarily at the time.² In the first half of the 13th century,

¹ *Moğolların Gizli Tarihi*, trans. Ahmet Temir, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2010), p. 191.

² When King Béla came to the throne, the feudal lords subject to the kingdom did not like him. The feudal lords had driven a wedge between Béla and his father Andre. In addition, before King Béla came to the throne, the feudal lords had offered the crown of Hungary to Austria and Frederik II. One of the first things Béla did when he came to the throne was to take away the wealth of these feudal lords and punish many of them.

As a result, there was dissatisfaction with Béla among the rich at that time. See also Abraham Constantin Mouradgea D'ohsson, *Moğol Tarihi*, trans. Mustafa Rahmî, (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2021), p. 171. This dissatisfaction with King Béla is also mentioned in one of the most important Western sources of the period, "Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament Upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars" written by Master Roger of Torre Maggiore. Master Roger finds the reason for the enmity

the kingdom had borders extending to the Adriatic Coast in the west. On the other hand, the eastern border of the Kingdom was the Carpathian Mountains. The Hungarian Kingdom politically and militarily dominated the geography of Romania, which is the subject of our paper. The Carpathian Mountains was a kind of natural shelter for the Hungarian Kingdom with its well-fortified passes. The Kingdom had political and military dominance over the lands south of the Danube River.³ This even disturbed the neighboring kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria. Hungary posed a direct threat to these kingdoms.⁴ The Kingdom of Hungary settled the Cumans to have an influential population area in the east. It also pursued an eastern policy of trying to bring the Galician Principality of Volhynia into submission.⁵

By the end of 1240, the Mongol army arrived to the border of the Hungarian kingdom. According to the information given by Master Roger, after conquering Russia and Cumania, the Mongolians retreated to a four or five days away distance and initially did not make any attack on the Hungarian frontiers. They provided food for the horses and soldiers here. However, when the food supply for soldiers and horses ran out, the Mongols were forced to organize an expedition to Hungary.⁶ Considering the nomadic character of the crowded Mongol army, the need for pasture for horses was important. Yet, the idea that the Mongols dispatched an entire army to a country only because of the need for meadow ground is an incomplete interpretation considering the strategic goals of the Mongols.

between the King and the Hungarians in the invitation of the Cumans to Hungary and the King's annexation of the estates of the rich to his property.

The King's desire to create a patrimonial state was not welcomed by the aristocrats of the time and thus enmity arose. See also *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, (İstanbul: Kronik Yayınları, 2020), p. 144-147.

³ In 1235, King Béla's brother Kalman led a military expedition and captured Hum in Serbia, Braničevo, and Belgrade in the north-west of the Kingdom of Bulgaria. See also Panos Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasion of Croatia and Serbia in 1242", *Fragmenta Hellanoslavica*, Vol. 2 (2015), p. 257.

⁴ Panos Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasion of Croatia and Serbia in 1242", p. 257.

⁵ Erdal Çoban, *Ortaçağ'da Kumanlar ve Macarlar*, (Ankara: Nobel Akademik, 2014), p. 56.

⁶ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 164.

2. The Situation of Cumans in the Kingdom of Hungary

After the Battle of Kalka in 1224, the Cumans migrated westwards. As a result of the campaigns organised by the Mongols to control the entire Dasht-i Kipchak region in 1238-1239, the resistance of the Cumans living in the Caucasus, Crimea, Dnieper, and Dniester was broken. Thus, the Cumans led by Kuthen Khan migrated to the Carpathians basin towards the Hungarian border.⁷ The Cumans sought asylum in the Kingdom of Hungary⁸, and in response, King Béla, invited the Cumans fled from the Mongols to Hungary on condition that they accept Christianity. The Cumans entered the country in 1239 through the Radna Pass, the gateway to the Eastern Carpathians. According to the information given by Master Roger, about 40,000 immigrants settled in Hungary.⁹ The settlement of a nomadic population like the Mongols in Hungary was advantageous in that the kingdom had a population who knew nomadic warfare tactics defeating the Mongols several times. Also disadvantageous as the Cumans had constant problems due to their nomadic lifestyle causing many social problems and conflicts between the settled and nomadic populations in the Hungary Kingdom.¹⁰

One of the reasons for the Mongol expedition was the fact that the Cumans who fled from the Mongols and defected to the Kingdom of Hungary. The primary goal of the Mongols was to control the Dasht-i Kipchak region and the Cumans (Kipchaks) under their sovereignty. Likewise, the Russian princes fled from the Mongols and defected to the Kingdom of Hungary was a serious threat to the Mongols. Mikhail Vsevolodovich, the knight of Chernigov and Kiev defected to the

⁷ Erdal Çoban, *Ortaçağ'da Kumanlar ve Macarlar*, p. 57.

⁸ Hungarian chronicles do not know the circumstances under which the Cumans arrived in Hungary. Many historical facts become known thanks to a letter written to the bishop of Palestrina in the Carmen miserabile of Rogerius of Apulia, a priest of Nagyvarad at the time. Accordingly, Köten Khan sent a delegation of envoys to the Hungarian court and informed them that he and his people were ready to enter the king's nationality, if the king would receive them and guarantee their freedom. He also proposed through the envoys that they would convert to Catholicism en masse. See also Erdal Çoban, *Ortaçağ'da Kumanlar ve Macarlar*, p. 59-60.

⁹ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 141-142.

¹⁰ Master Roger mentions that the Hungarians were destroying the pastures and fields of the Hungarians due to the large number of animals of the Cumans. He also draws attention to the difficulties between the Cumans and Hungarians in social life. See also *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 143-144.

Hungarians after seeing the capture of Chernigov by the Mongols, without waiting for the fall of Kiev, just like his son had done before.¹¹

The main reason for the Mongolian interest in Hungary was that it constituted the westernmost end of the steppe belt and could be a base for the Mongolian cavalry for further operations in Central Europe, as it had been for Attila and Huns eight centuries earlier.¹² In the Kurultay convened in 1236, it was aimed that the Mongols would not be satisfied with Eastern Europe, but would also go as far as the interior of Europe. For this reason, it can be said that the Mongols were targeting not only Central Europe but also Western Europe.

When the letter written by the Dominican friar Julian, who was sent to Eastern Europe during the Mongol expedition to southern Russia and was the first witness of the arrival of the Mongols in Europe, is analyzed, it can be seen that the Mongols planned how they would conquer the Kingdom of Hungary. It is also learned from this letter that the Mongols' next goal was to capture Rome and go beyond it.¹³

3. Political and Military Measures Taken by the Hungarian Kingdom against the Mongols

King Béla had taken some military measures against the activities of the Mongol army in the east. The first of these was to use the Cumans in his army, who had a nomadic character like the Mongols, who used the same type of weapons and applied the same war tactics. In addition, the Cumans were experienced since they had fought with the Mongolian forces before.

The Hungarian Kingdom did not neglect to take defensive measures. At least two points behind the East Carpathian passes were reinforced. The most important fortified pass was Oituz. In addition, border guards of Szek origin¹⁴, who had lived with the Romanian population in the 12th and 13th centuries, were stationed in the area behind

¹¹ Erdal Çoban, *Ortaçağ'da Kumanlar ve Macarlar*, p. 56.

¹² George Vernadsky, *Moğollar ve Ruslar*, trans. Eşref Bengi Özbilen, (İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2007), p. 73.

¹³ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 81.

¹⁴ There is much debate about the origin of the Szeklers. For detailed information on the subject, see: Ayşe Öz, *Ortaçağ'da Macarlar ve Sekeller*, Ph.D. Thesis, (Ankara: Ankara University, 2021).

Oituz Pass.¹⁵ The Szeklers were also responsible for the eastern border of Transylvania. Fortifications were built on the mountain ranges, the roads from Oituz and other passes.¹⁶

After King Béla learned that the Mongols had captured Kiev, he sent an army unit to the place known as the Gate of Russia.¹⁷ In addition, he called on all the nobles in the kingdom, the king's servants, and their castle guards to join the army against the Mongols.¹⁸

Béla had declared a general mobilization after the fall of Kiev. He marched with his army from the Hungarian-Russian frontiers to the Polish border. He had taken care of some things here, such as blocking the roads and putting obstacles in the way.¹⁹

Besides taking military measures against the Mongols, the Kingdom of Hungary also attempted to establish political relations with neighboring states. The Mongol threat necessitated the convergence of Hungary and Bulgaria. Therefore, both states allied the common defense against the Mongols.²⁰ However, Béla also sought help from many places, especially the Pope and other European countries, to establish a political alliance with other European kingdoms against the Mongol threat. Eventually, Béla's desired alliance could not be successful and he did not receive any support from other Western countries.

4. The Beginning of the Mongol Western Campaign

The Western campaign, which began in 1236, was a long military campaign that took control of the lands of the Dasht-i Kipchak area and the South Russian principalities until the end of 1240. The Mongols continued their campaigns in Eastern Europe and Central Europe without interruption in order to realise their goals towards the west.

¹⁵ Alexandru Madgearu, "The Mongol domination and the detachment of the Romanians of Walachia from the domination of the Hungarian Kingdom", *De Medio Aveo*, Vol. 12/1 (2018), p. 218.

¹⁶ Alexandru Madgearu, "The Mongol domination and the detachment of the Romanians of Walachia from the domination of the Hungarian Kingdom", p. 219.

¹⁷ A place the Hungarians call Orosz-kapu.

¹⁸ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 155.

¹⁹ Erdal Çoban, *Ortaçağ'da Kumanlar ve Macarlar*, p. 65.

²⁰ Alexandru Madgearu, *The Asanids The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1280)*, (Leiden- Boston: Brill, 2016), p. 223.

It was important for the Mongols to capture the Principality of Galicia Volhynia in this campaign. Dominating this region expanded the mobility capacity of the Mongolians in Hungary, Poland and Romania. In order to military operation, the Mongol armies were concentrated in the Western lands of the principality of Galicia Volhynia, and possibly in the north of Moldova.²¹ After the capture of the region, Batu did not send the total force of the army directly to Central Europe. He divided the army in Galicia-Volynia into three parts.

In the background of the division of the army into three columns, it is widely believed that the Mongols were militarily and tactically neutralized by encircling the enemy country from different directions and leaving it vulnerable. The aim here was to capture Hungary completely by orienting the army towards different strategic targets. In another noteworthy view, the division of the army was associated with the distribution of fiefs planned for the region, in which representatives of the four Genghis branches would take part. According to this view, essentially all dynasty members would have shares in the newly achieved lands.²²

The aim of the first army, commanded by Batu and Subutai, was to break through the defenses of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Carpathians and then penetrate the interior of the kingdom to destroy the enemy army. The second army, commanded by Batu's elder brother Orda-Icen and Baidar was to march through Poland into Germany and then into Slovakia. The army's aim here was to prevent probable support to the Hungarian Kingdom from the north. The historian Stephen Pow made a comparative analysis of the main sources of the period on this subject. In his opinion, the strategic reason behind the Mongol military campaign against Poland is not clear. According to his point of view, the argument for the prevention of reinforcements from Poland to Hungary is a modern assumption.²³

²¹ Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Region", *The Golden Horde In World History*, (Kazan, 2017), p. 396.

²² Stephen Pow, "Mongol Inroads Into Hungary In The Thirteenth Century Investigating some unexplored avenues", *The Routledge Handbook of the Mongols and Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. Alexander V. Maiorov and Roman Hautala, (New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 102.

²³ Stephen Pow, "Mongol Inroads Into Hungary In The Thirteenth Century Investigating some unexplored avenues", p. 100.

The primary task of the third army, commanded by Kadan and Buri, was to advance through the Borgo Pass into Transylvania and destroy the Hungarian towns along the Danube.²⁴ It was also among the tasks of the army to capture the Cuman settlements in the region and to neutralize the danger of the Cumans.

During the campaign, on 12 March 1241, the central army (first army) commanded by Batu and Subutai confronted the troops sent by King Béla to cross the Verecke Pass.²⁵ As a result of this clash, the Mongol army managed to cross the pass and enter the Kingdom of Hungary. Upon receiving this news, King Béla declared mobilization throughout the country and asked the Cumans to join him. He then crossed the Danube with the army gathered from the cities of Strigoniu and Albensi and moved towards Pest that located on the other side of the Danube opposite Buda.²⁶

Before the entrance of the central army into Hungary, the second army under the command of Orda-Icen and Baidar attacked Poland and captured Sandomir on 13 February 1241 to prevent any military aid or attack on Hungary from the north. After this attack, the Mongols captured many Polish towns.

5. The Start of the Third Army's Campaign in Transylvania, the Resistance against the Third Army at Rodna, and the Capture of Rodna

The third army's target, Transylvania, was strategically located on a transit route. The region was a basin surrounded by mountains from the east and south, and on the other side by difficult passes and rivers. There were many hills and the rivers were natural bridges for communication and transport.²⁷ At that time, Transylvania was administratively dominated by counties under Hungary and the region was under the command of the Count of Sibiu. Additionally, the Hungarian Kingdom settled Saxons of

²⁴ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 13

²⁵ The Verecke Pass is one of the most important connecting routes between the east-European Plain and the Middle Danube basin, a route used by many other migrants, including the Mongols in 1241. See also Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century*, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 71.

²⁶ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 160.

²⁷ Pınar Yiğit Türker, *Orta Çağ Erdel'inde Hâkim Unsurlar ve Sekeller*, PhD Thesis, (Ankara: Ankara University, 2022), p. 3.

Germanic origin in the region to revitalize Transylvania's military network.²⁸

Batu was aware that the geography of Transylvania was tough. In addition, the Hungarian Kingdom had strengthened the defenses of the region and new fortifications had been built. Romania was a better-fortified front for the Mongols than other regions in Central Europe. For all these reasons, Batu assigned three of his valuable commanders at the same time only for this front.

In the third army, Ögedei's son Kadan, Chagatai's grandson Buri, and Tolui's son Buchek were appointed. These commanders had increased their reputation thanks to their military successes in previous battles. These military successes were instrumental in their appointment to this front, which was very important for the capture of Transylvania. Before joining the Western campaign in 1236, Kadan participated in the campaign against the Song Empire in 1235-1236, where he was one of the three commanders who captured the Song Empire, thus enhancing his military reputation.²⁹ In the great Western campaign of 1236, he achieved many successes in establishing Mongol dominance in Dasht-i Kipchak, the southern Russian principalities, and the Caucasus. All this may explain why Kadan was entrusted with this front. Buri had achieved success in the military campaigns against the Song Empire and Russian principalities in close cooperation with Kadan and gained a military reputation.³⁰ On the other hand, Buchek distinguished himself in the great Western campaign of the Mongols in 1236 by being prominent in the campaigns against the Bulgarians, Alans, Russians, and Cumans. In particular, his successes in the campaign against the Cumans were instrumental in his reassigning to re-establish the dominance of the Cumans in this front. In addition, Kadan, Buri, and Buchek took part in the same army during the capture of Kiev.³¹

²⁸ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century The Rise of the Congregational System*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 16-17.

²⁹ Rene Grousset, *Stepler İmparatorluğu Atilla, Cengiz Han, Timur*, trans. Halil İnalçık, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), p. 268.

³⁰ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 8-9.

³¹ Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami'u't- Tawarikh Compendium of Chronicles*, trans. and annotated by W.M. Thackston, ed. Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin, Part Two, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 331.

The commanders of the third army, Kadan and Buri moved from Galicia towards the Carpathians.³² On 31 March 1241, the third army crossed the Carpathians in the northeast through the Borgo pass³³ and moved towards Transylvania. Master Roger said that this army arrived in the Teutonic country after a three-day journey. The land of the Teutons mentioned by Master Roger was Rodna, a mountainous town inhabited by Saxons³⁴ famous for its silver mines.³⁵ Likewise, Rashiduddin Fazlullah in his work *Jami'u't- Tawarikh* mentions that the army commanded by Kadan and Buri set out for the Saxon country.³⁶

There were German origin Saxons in Rodna. As a warrior community, the Saxons strongly resisted against the Mongol army. Master Roger mentions that the Saxons had a large number of armed soldiers and this forced Kadan to retreat.³⁷ They took the Mongol retreat as a victory and did not take any measures against them. The reason for the Mongolian withdrawal was the feigned retreat tactic often employed by nomadic armies. It is well known that nomadic armies with light cavalry used such retreat tactics to avoid close combat against infantry and heavy cavalry armies. Cavalry-dominated armies also employed this tactic in the siege of fortresses when they were unable to overcome a resisting enemy. Since the Saxons were not familiar with the feigned retreat tactic and the city of

³² Tudor Salageon does not think that the third army moved from Galicia (Halych). Batu's crossing of the Verecke Pass was on 10 March, while Kadan and Buri's entry into Transylvania was on 31 March. Considering the time difference between the two armies, according to him, the southern wing of the Mongol army could not have started the attack from Galicia. He therefore suggests that we should consider the existence of an additional assembly area of the southern wing of the Mongol army, probably somewhere in the Lower or Middle Dniester. See also Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 25-26. Victor Spinei states that the Mongolian force led by Kadan was advancing westward along the road between Russia and Cumania, that is, through the northern part of Moldova. Victor Spinei, "Gospodstvo Zolotoy Ordi v Valahii i Moldovii", *Zolotoordinskoe Obozrenie*, Vol. 4 (2016), p. 738.

³³ Another opinion about the date here belongs to Peter Jackson. Jackson mentions that Batu and Subutay passed through the Verecke pass, while Kadan and Buri passed through the Borgo pass on 28 March. See also Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, (Harlow and New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), p. 63-64.

³⁴ They were a Germanic people living in Transylvania. The Hungarian Kingdom settled the Saxons in and around Rodna because they were skilled in mining. At the same time, this community is known for its warrior qualities.

³⁵ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 167.

³⁶ Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami'u't- Tawarikh Compendium of Chronicles*, p. 331.

³⁷ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 167.

Rodna was not fortified, the Mongol army turned back in a sudden maneuver and easily attacked in all directions and captured the city.³⁸ The capture of Rodna was an important stage in the campaign. Rashid al-Din informs that Kadan's army dominated the regions inhabited by the Sasanian people after three separate battles. One of these battles must have been the battle at Rodna. After capturing Rodna, the Mongols recruited 600 well-armed Teutonic soldiers led by the city's count Ariscald.³⁹

In response to the Mongol advance into Transylvania, the count of Sibiu organized a force of Saxons and Szeklers to fight the Mongols. In addition, the count of Sibiu's defense army also included Romanians and Pechenegs. According to Tudor Salagean, the Saxons and Szeklers were not strong enough in the defence of Transylvania. Therefore, the Romanians were also included in the military organization for the defense of Transylvania.⁴⁰

After capturing Rodna, the Mongol army turned to the south and moved towards the Someșul Mare River. Under the guidance of Aristaldus, the leader of the Saxons, Kadan's army reached the city of Bistrita⁴¹ and captured it on 2 April 1241. Another battle between Kadan and the Saxons mentioned by Rashiduddin Fazlullah may have been the one at Bistrita.⁴² The capture of Bistrita marked the end of Saxon resistance in northeastern Transylvania. Then Kadan destroyed the salt mines around Dej. As can be seen, the Mongol army followed the route of the great salt trade route established in northern Transylvania, which had also been used in Roman times.⁴³ Kadan and Buri captured the royal fortress at Dăbâca. Then, on 11 April, they took control of the city called Cluj.⁴⁴

The army then moved on to Waradin, one of the most important towns in Transylvania. It is not certain when Kadan arrived at Waradin. Nevertheless, Master Roger clearly describes the capture of the city by the

³⁸ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 167.

³⁹ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 168.

⁴⁰ Tudor Salagean, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 17.

⁴¹ The Hungarian name is Beszterce.

⁴² "Kadan and Buri set out in the direction of the Sasanian people. After three battles, they defeated those people. Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami'u't- Tawarikh Compendium of Chronicles*, p. 331.

⁴³ Stephen Pow, "Mongol Inroads Into Hungary In The Thirteenth Century Investigating some unexplored avenues", p. 100.

⁴⁴ Tudor Salagean, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 27.

Mongols. When the Mongol army arrived in the region, the people of Waradin took refuge in the citadel. The Mongols managed to penetrate the fortifications of the city and plundered it. However, they could not capture the castle. Then they suddenly withdrew from the castle and deployed to a place 5 miles away from the castle. The people in the citadel thought that the Mongols were retreating and evacuated the citadel completely. Upon seeing this situation, the Mongol army suddenly attacked and besieged the castle without wasting time. While besieging the castle, the Mongols placed seven war machines around the wall, rained rocks until the castle fell, and finally, they captured the castle.⁴⁵ Following the capture of Waradin by Kadan, Tamashida⁴⁶ the city of the Teutons mentioned by Master Roger in the south-west of Waradin was also captured. Kadan's army then marched on Cenad and controlled it as well.

There is varying information in the sources about the operations of Buchek's army, which led to the other branch of the third army. According to the information given by Master Roger, there was a commander named Bärkächar who crossed the Zerech River⁴⁷ and marched towards the lands inhabited by the Cumans. Nonetheless, most historians accept that the Bärkächar mentioned by Master Roger was Buchek, who organized an expedition southwards from the Cuman bishopric.

It is not clear whether Buchek's troops advanced from Galicia and Northern Moldavia or Dasht-i Kipchak.⁴⁸ After fierce battles with the Cumans, he captured the Cuman bishopric between the Siret and Olt Rivers.⁴⁹ This prevented the Cumans from organizing themselves in the region in any way and posing a danger to the Mongols. After following the Siret River, the next destination of Buchek's army was the Oituz Pass, which had long been used by the nomadic armies to enter the Transylvanian region. The pass was fortified by the Hungarian Kingdom and was one of the strongest passes in Transylvania. Moreover, according to Tholomeus of Lucca and other Italian chronicles, the task of defending the mountain pass was entrusted to the Romanians and Szeklers, a force that was unable to stop the advance of the Mongol army.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *Moğollar Avrupa'da* trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 197.

⁴⁶ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 199.

⁴⁷ Siret River.

⁴⁸ Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions", p. 399.

⁴⁹ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 169.

⁵⁰ Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions", p. 399.

Rashiduddin mentions that Buchek marched on the way to Qara Ulaghi and defeated the Ulaghi people, then moved with his army to the forests and mountains near a place called Mishlav and defeated the forces waiting there.⁵¹ Mishlav probably fought against Buchek's army as a local chief of the Wallachians. Besides Rashiduddin, the information that Buchek's forces defeated the Vlachs and captured is also mentioned in Latin sources. Giovanni Villani of Tuscany (1275-1348) mentioned in his chronicle that the Mongols captured Wallachia.⁵² Eventually, Buchek's forces were successful against the Wallachians and later captured the Burzenland region.⁵³ He took control of the cities of Cetatea de Baltă and then Alba Iulia. The next military itinerary of his army was Cârța, Cetatea de Baltă, Shebesh, Alba Iulia, Sibiu, Orăștie and Hunedoara, Banat and Sirem. It can be assumed that Buchek's unit was the one that destroyed the southern part of Transylvania during the campaign.

The question of whether the troops that captured Burzenland, Cetatea de Baltă, and Alba Iulia belonged to Buchek is a matter of debate among researchers. Victor Spinei states that the person named Bärkächar mentioned in the memoirs written by Master Roger could be either Buchek or Bärkächar, son of Jöchi and brother of Batu. After destroying the Cuman Bishopric, this Mongol troop presumably led by Buchek or Bärkächar, and entered Transylvania via Oituz Pass, which was the easiest way from Moldova to the inner Carpathia Arc.⁵⁴ Denis Sinor emphasizes that on 31 March 1241, Kadan and Buri were at the head of a force that crossed the Carpathians from the northeast through the Borgo Pass, while another unidentified force crossed the Carpathian arc and passed through the Oituz Pass.⁵⁵

Tudor Salagean put forward a different view. According to him, on 31 March 1241, Buri's troops crossed the mountains and defeated the army of Voivode Pousa, and on 4 April 1241, they captured the town of Kumelburch. He claims that once Buri's army was beyond the well-

⁵¹ Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami'u't-Tawarikh Compendium of Chronicles*, p. 331.

⁵² Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions", p. 399.

⁵³ Istvan Zimony, "Moğolların Batı Seferleri", *Journal of Turkish History Researches*, trans. Şeyma Gezer, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2019), p. 449. Stephen Pow, "Mongol Inroads into Hungary in the Thirteenth Century", p. 100.

⁵⁴ Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions", p. 399.

⁵⁵ Denis Sinor, "The Mongols in the West", *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (1999), p. 13.

fortified Burzenland, his forces split into two, one of which captured Cetatea de Baltă and Alba Iulia and Turda and moved towards the centre of Transylvania. He also mentions that the unit, whose commander is unknown, moved down the Olt River valley towards the city of Sibiu and destroyed the Cistercian monastery of Cârța.⁵⁶

Istvan Zimonyi states that Buchek and Buri, the two corps of the southern wing of the Western campaign, moved via the Oituz and Vöröstorony passes⁵⁷ and the unit that crossed the Oituz Pass defeated the Voivode of Erdel and attacked Barcasag, then controlled Küküllővár⁵⁸ and Gyufehervar⁵⁹ and waited for the other corps. The corps that passed the Vöröstorony Pass captured Nagyszeben⁶⁰ on 11th April and then arrived Gyulafehervar. He states that the two units, the units of Buchek and Buri, united and marched along the Maros and met the army commanded by Kadan at Cenad. As can be seen, due to insufficient information, the information on the mobilization phase of Buri and Buchek's army and the activities of their armies in the region varies in the sources.

After capturing Warad, Kadan's army moved towards Cenad, located at the confluence of the Mureş and Tisza rivers, and captured the city on 25 April. Subsequently, the troops of the third army commanders assigned for the domination of Romanian geography met in Cenad. This meeting took place probably at the end of April. The armies assigned to Romanian geography came together, crossed Szeged and Tisza, marched on Pest and the main Mongol army arrived in Pest on 30 April.

The army spent the summer of 1241 between the Danube and Tisza rivers. In the winter of 1241, when the Danube frozen, the Mongol army took action and captured Esztergom. Following the capture of the fortress of Esztergom, Kadan was assigned by Batu to follow King Béla, who had fled after losing the battle of Mohi. With a policy specific to the steppe world, the Mongols focused on the conscious and systematic destruction of the enemy ruling layer rather than the elimination of the masses in the regions they planned to control. They never gave up on pursuing them to the end and used every means to capture them. Because there was always

⁵⁶ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 28.

⁵⁷ Turnu Roşu Pass in modern Romania.

⁵⁸ Cetatea de Baltă.

⁵⁹ Alba Iulia.

⁶⁰ Sibiu.

the possibility that an enemy Khan who would survive could reorganize the people, they had subjugated and considered their servants by the laws of war for resistance.⁶¹

King Béla first sought refuge in the Duchy of Austria, but when he realized that he could not stay there, he left Austria and took refuge in Zagreb (Agram) in Croatia. As soon as Béla received intelligence that Kadan was moving to capture him, he fled from Zagreb towards the Dalmatian coast. He took shelter first in Spalato, then in Trao, and finally on an island near the Adriatic.⁶² Having heard that the king had taken refuge on an island, Kadan followed the king's route and finally established his headquarters near the island where he took shelter. Kadan spent the month of March 1242 here. However, he retreated due to the difficult geography of Croatia and the inability to capture the castles in the region. King Béla, who was sure of the departure of the Mongol army from the region, returned to Hungary.

The Mongol army began to retreat at the end of 1241 upon the news of the death of the Great Khan Ögedei. Many opinions have been put forward about the Mongolian retreat. Researchers have evaluated the reasons behind the retreat as political, military, geographical and gradual conquest.⁶³ George Vernadsky believes that the reason behind the retreat of the Mongol army was purely political. He emphasizes that Batu himself was a potential candidate for the election of the khanate and states that during the Western campaign, Batu was worried about the conflicts between himself and Güyük and Buri and that it was more important for him to struggle for a strong position in Mongol politics than to continue the European campaign.⁶⁴

Researchers who explain the retreat through the theory of military weakness argue that the Mongols abandoned the invasion plan due to the great losses suffered on the Russian, Polish, and Hungarian fronts.⁶⁵ There are also theories explaining the retreat with geographical theory. The theory put forward by Denis Sinor was later brought up for re-evaluation by researchers such as Ulf Buntgen and Nicolo Di Cosmo. According to

⁶¹ Erdal Çoban, *Orta Çağ'da Kumanlar ve Macarlar*, p. 61.

⁶² Abraham Constantin Mouradgea D'ohsson, *Moğol Tarihi*, p. 177.

⁶³ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 30.

⁶⁴ George Vernadsky, *Moğollar ve Ruslar*, p. 79.

⁶⁵ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 30.

this theory, the reason for the retreat was that the Great Hungarian Plain, where the Mongols grazed their herds, became swampy due to climatic and ecological changes, and the Mongols could not feed their soldiers and provide livestock adequately.⁶⁶ According to the gradual conquest theory, the reason for the retreat was that the Mongols saw the 1241 campaign as the first stage of the attack on Europe.⁶⁷ Considering all these theories, the Mongol withdrawal from the Western campaign cannot be attributed to a single cause and circumstance. It is necessary to address the issue of the withdrawal in the 1241 campaign by considering multiple factors and casualties.

6. Evaluation of the Mongolian Armies Entering the Romanian Region from the Perspective of Military History

The southern branch of the Mongol army organized for the Western campaign appears to have moved more slowly than the other branches. According to the army's timetable, it is assumed that Kadan and Buri intended to participate in the battle of Mohi on April 11. There are many reasons for the army's delay. The difficulties caused by geographical changes are notable in this regard. The difficulties encountered in Romania due to the previously fortified passes and fortresses of the Carpathian Mountains are also considered as a reason for the delay, and it can be said that the third army moved later than the other branches of the Mongol army.

In the military campaign that began in the winter of 1241, the second army had achieved significant successes in Poland, Germany, and Slovakia in February, while the third army was only able to enter Transylvania through the Borgo Pass at the end of March.

In military operations, the route of the expedition and the routes of march were also crucial for the outcome of the war. While the army commanded by Batu and Subutai crossed the distance between Verecke Pass and Pest at an astonishing speed of more than 50 kilometers per day, Kadan and Buri's troops could cross Transylvania at a speed of only 20

⁶⁶ See the article Ulf Büntgen and Nicola Di Cosmo, "Climatic and environmental aspects of the Mongol withdrawal from Hungary in 1242 CE." *Scientific Reports*, 6 (2016), p. 1-9.

⁶⁷ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 30.

kilometers per day.⁶⁸ Another reason for the slower pace of the third army compared to the other armies was that the Mongol army encountered resistance in many places in Transylvania. The Mongols found it difficult to take well-fortified fortresses in this region.

In Romania, the forces defending the Carpathian passes against the Mongols were composed of Saxons, Romanians, and Szeklers. To protect the borders, the Hungarian Kingdom built linear fortifications made of small wooden stones, called *indajin*, which were built in successive advances during the conquest of the region.⁶⁹ This defense system in the region may have prevented the early advance of the Mongols.

When all these results are evaluated there are many opinions about the size of the Mongol army participating in the 1241 Western campaign. First of all, Master Roger states in his work that the Mongols entered the Kingdom of Hungary with 500,000 armed soldiers.⁷⁰ Considering the conditions and human resources of that period, it seems to us that this number is slightly exaggerated. After the capture of Kiev, the return of Güyük and Möngke to Karakorum and their absence from the next military campaign reduced the number of the Mongol army. Rashiduddin does not give clear information about the number of soldiers participating in the Batu campaign of the Mongols. Denis Sinor, one of the researchers, estimates that the Mongol army was divided into divisions of 10,000 men, and Batu's four corps, which formed the right and left wings, had a total of at least 40,000 soldiers. He states that the Hungarian forces totaled around 65,000. Sinor thinks that it is logical that the Mongolian central army opposing the Hungarian army was at least as large as the enemy force. Sinor's most conservative estimate is that the Mongol army, including the central army and additional forces, totaled between 105,000 and 150,000.⁷¹ Tudor Salageon, on the other hand, estimated the Mongol army strength at between 120,000 and 140,000, including backup forces recruited from captured territories.⁷²

⁶⁸ Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 29

⁶⁹ Alexandru Madgearu, "The Mongol domination and the detachment of the Romanians of Walachia from the domination of the Hungarian Kingdom", *De Medio Aveo*, Vol. 12/1 (2018), p. 219.

⁷⁰ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 163.

⁷¹ Denis Sinor, "The Mongols in the West", p. 19.

⁷² Tudor Salageon, *Transylvania in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century*, p. 7.

The Mongols formed additional forces by supplying soldiers to their armies from the captured regions. These additional forces had the effect of increasing the manpower of the Mongol armies in terms of recruitment. Factors such as the distance from the center of the Mongol Empire, long-lasting wars, and the low population of the Mongols were the reasons for the Mongols to make such reinforcements. Without the Mongols' practice of capturing enemy soldiers and using them in their army, the Mongolian military capacity during long campaigns would have been greatly reduced.⁷³ Information on the integration, training, and utilization of these soldiers is limited. The inclusion of Saxon soldiers into the army after the third army captured Rodna during the Western campaign is an example in this regard, and according to some sources, captured Saxon soldiers were used both as guide and vanguard to learn geography better.⁷⁴

Toma of Split provides clear information about the weapons used by the Mongols in the Western campaign. Toma emphasized that Mongol armor was reinforced with ox skin and was extremely strong against puncture, their helmets were made of iron and leather, their swords were curved, they used quivers for their arrows, the arrows were four fingers longer than in the west, and made of iron, bone or horn, Mongol horses were short, strong and resistant to lack of food. Russian sources state that the Mongols used catapults and ladders to capture walled cities. The Mongols had to besiege at least five castles between Oradea and Cenad, especially in Romania.⁷⁵ As mentioned above, the fortified passes and fortresses of Transylvania forced the Mongols to use catapults. The Mongols included catapults in their army equipment and almost all the fortresses and fortifications they encountered were captured with this siege weapon.

⁷³ Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions", p. 397.

⁷⁴ *Moğollar Avrupa'da*, trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan, p. 168,196.

⁷⁵ Jozsef Laszlovszky, Stephen Pow, Beatrix F. Romhanyi, Laszlo Ferenczi and Zsolt Pinke, "Contextualizing the Mongol Invasion of Hungary in 1241-42: Short and Long-Term Perspectives", *Hungarian Historical Review*, Vol. 7, No.3 (2018), p. 430-431.

Conclusion

The 1241 Western campaign was one of the most important campaigns of the Mongols that influenced the history of Europe. This study focuses on the military activities of the Mongols during the Western campaign in Romania. In this context, firstly, the pre-war conditions of the Mongolian and Hungarian forces, their maneuvers during the war, the military structure of the Mongolian army, and the army commanders who determined the campaign hierarchy were mentioned. In addition, matters such as the military and geographical difficulties encountered by the Mongol armies, the troop dispatch, the supply of soldiers, and the weapons and equipment used in the campaign were also evaluated.

The reasons for the fact that troops sent to Romania during the Mongols' Western campaign moved slower than the troops sent to other regions because of the difficult geographical conditions, the resistance of the peoples in the region, and the fortifications of the region. Despite all these difficulties, the Mongol army succeeded in controlling Romania. The direct command of the Mongol army by the princes of the Genghisids, the well-organized permanent troops, the presence of experienced commanders, the successful implementation of deterrence and war tactics, the technological superiority of weapons and equipment according to the conditions of the period, and the ability to provide supply and subsistence without facing problem were effective in the success of the Mongols in the region.

The arrival of the Mongols in Romania had an administrative and military impact on the Romanian geography in the following period. The administrative experiences of the Mongols in Romania regarding state organization and administration provided an example for the rulers of Wallachia and Bogdan in the following years.⁷⁶ The establishment of an administrative and military mechanism by the Mongols in the region ended the domination of the Kingdom of Hungary in Romania and led to the emergence of Wallachia and Bogdan-based kingdoms in the region.

⁷⁶ Alexandru Madgearu, "The Mongol domination and the detachment of the Romanians of Walachia from the domination of the Hungarian Kingdom", p. 227.

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THE END OF THE GOLDEN HORDE DOMINATION IN THE TERRITORY BETWEEN EASTERN CARPATHIANS AND DNIESTER

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Abstract

The Golden Horde (Ulug Ulus) established its domination in the regions peopled by Romanians east and south of Carpathians after the Mongol invasion of 1241. At the end of the 13th century, these regions entered under the rule of the independent power center established by Emir Nogai at Isaccea. This stopped the expansion of Hungary. The administration introduced by the Golden Horde was partially inherited by the future Romanian states of Walachia and Moldavia. The decline which followed the death of Khan Özbek (1313-1341), gave to the Hungarian King Ludovic of Anjou (1342-1382) the opportunity to resume the policy of expansion east of the Carpathians. In 1345 and 1346 were launched offensives through several mountain passes. The forces were mainly composed of warriors from Transylvania and Maramureş, under the command of Andrew Läckfi, the Count of the Szeklers. The Romanians from Maramureş who fought in these campaigns received in 1347 from the King the right to master a *terra* in the region of the Moldova River (the part conquered by Hungary was extended in that moment only up to Siret). This was the beginning of the Romanian state Moldova. The second period of the liberation of the territory dominated by the Golden Horde began in 1353, when the Tatars were defeated by a Hungarian-Polish coalition. After that, the civil war occurred in the Golden Horde made possible the great victory of the Lithuanian Duke Olgierd in the battle of Sinie Vodi in 1363. In the same year, the Voevode Bogdan detached the Moldavian *terra* from the Hungarian vassalage. The disappearance of the Golden Horde domination enabled this young state to reach in a few decades the natural limit of Dniester.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, Golden Horde, Hungary, Mongol Invasion, Romania, Tatars.

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The entire region today known as Moldova, from the Eastern Carpathians to the Dniester, belonged to the Golden Horde since the Mongol invasion of 1241. Its domination was also extended over Wallachia, but now I will discuss only the circumstances in which the territory of the future Moldavian state was liberated from the Tatars. The western part of the gigantic empire created by the Mongols, the Golden Horde, also known as *Uluğ Ulus*, had its capital at Sarai on Volga, but at the end of the 13th century an independent power center was established in the Lower Danubian area, at Isaccea, by Nogai, a brave military commander who descended from Genghis-Han.¹ The Tatar name *Saqčy* is mentioned on the coins of Nogai, in the *History* of Baybars al-Mansuri, and in the *Geography* of Abulfida from 1325 (*Isaccea* appeared by a confusion with the person name *Isac*). The territory between the Eastern Carpathians and Dniester belonged to this khanate with the center at Isaccea, which, according to Abulfida, was a city in the country of the Romanians.²

The Tatar domination stopped for a period of the expansion of Hungary outside the Carpathians. The northern part of the Tatar emirate of Isaccea was defended by a subjected population of the Golden Horde, the Alans or *Iasi*. The future town Iași remembers their name.³ The

¹ Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, (Iași: Demiurg, 2010), pp. 92-98, 102-111; Aleksandar Uzelac, “An Empire Within an Empire? Ethnic and Religious Realities in the Lands of Nogai (c. 1270-1300)”, *Chronica. Annual of the Institute of History*, University of Szeged, Vol. 18 (2018), pp. 271-283; Jack R. Wilson, “The Role of Nogai in the Golden Horde: A Reassessment”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (2022), pp. 609-637.

² Aboulféda, *Géographie, traduite de l’arabe en français et accompagnée de notes et d’éclaircissements par Joseph Toussaint Reinaud*, (Paris: A L’Imprimerie Royale, 1848), Vol. II/1, p. 316; Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, “Byzantino-Tartarica. Le monnayage dans la zone des bouches du Danube à la fin du XIIIe siècle et au commencement du XIVe siècle”, *Il Mar Nero. Annali di archeologia e storia*, Roma-Paris, Vol. 2 (1995-1996), pp. 200-211; István Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1183-1365*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2005, pp. 90, 91, 97; Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, Vol. 6), (Leiden: Boston, Brill, 2009), p. 32.

³ Virgil Ciocîltan, “Alanii și începuturile statelor românești”, *Revista Istorică*, serie nouă, Vol. 6, No. 11-12 (1995), pp. 939-947. The presence of the Alans in Moldavia was only briefly mentioned in the older studies (for instance Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, (București: Editura Eminescu, 1980), pp. 141-142, 147; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, p. 102).

administration introduced by the Golden Horde left in the Romanian language words related to the tax perceptions: *tarcan* (exemption), *damga* (*tamga*, the stamp with clan symbols), *vătămă* (chief of a village), *olac* (the customs). The toponymy transmitted the name *baskak* (local Tatar governor, who exerted the military command over the subjected population): *Bascacauți*, *Băscăceni* (medieval villages from the counties of Dorohoi and Hotin).⁴ It is possible that even *Dorogun*, the initial form of the name *Dorohoi* attested since 1407, was created after the name of the Mongol officials, *daruga*, who were in charge with the collection of the taxes.⁵ In the same northern part of Moldavia, at Pârteștii de Jos (Suceava County) was discovered the grave of a Tatar commander, which included in the inventory a *baisa* (the bronze medallion which proved the empowerment given by the khan) and a coin issued by Nogai at Isaccea.⁶

The future Romanian states Walachia and Moldavia will become the beneficiaries of the taxation and customs system created by the Tatar administration.⁷ Romanians from Moldova were recruited in the army of the Golden Horde like any other subjected populations. For instance, they fought in the battle of Kreussenbrunn (12 July 1260) between the Bohemian King Otakar and the Hungarian King Bela IV. Otakar was aided by a Tatar force which included some *Valachi*.⁸ In 1276, the same Otakar

⁴ Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, (București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1982), pp. 231-232; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 89, 99. For the Basqaqs, see István Vásáry, “The Origin of the Institution of Basqaqs”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1978), pp. 201-206.

⁵ Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 88-89. For the Darugi see István Vásáry, “The Golden Horde Term Daruga and its Survival in Russia”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1976), pp. 187-197. For Dorohoi, see Dragoș Moldovanu (ed.), *Tezaurul toponimic al României. Moldova, volumul II. Mic dicționar toponimic al Moldovei structural și etimologic, partea I, Toponime personale*, (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2014), p. 142.

⁶ Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, “Documente numismatice privind relațiile spațiului est-carpatic cu zona Gurile Dunării în secolele XIII-XIV”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie “A. D. Xenopol”*, Iași, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1985), p. 587; Denis Căprăroiu, *Orașul medieval în spațiul românesc extracarpatic (secolele X-XIV). O încercare de tipologizare a procesului genezei urbane*, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2014), p. 170.

⁷ Henri H. Stahl, *Studii de sociologie istorică*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1972), pp. 59-62; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, p. 89.

⁸ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, pp. 70, 71, 173; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, p. 166; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 93-94.

was helped by an army composed of *Brutenis ac Blacis* in the war against the Prussians (the Bruteni were the Ruthenians). These Romanians were therefore a distinct force in the army of the Golden Horde since the first decades of its domination in the territory peopled by them.⁹

After the defeat of Nogai in 1300 in a battle near the Dniepr,¹⁰ the Khan from Sarai Toqta (1291-1312) ruled over the Danubian region by the intermediary of the Bulgarian Tsar Theodore Svetoslav (1300-1322).¹¹ The security of the long distance trade provided by the Golden Horde domination contributed to the establishment of two flourishing towns in the central part of the region between Prut and Dniester, located near the present-day Orheiul Vechi and Costești. The name of the first one was *Şehr al-Djedid*, but the name of the city from Costești is unknown.¹² Cetatea Albă was founded on the place of the ancient Tyras, with the name of Akkerman (*Maurocastron* in the Italian sources). Another Genoese trading center, Chilia, benefited too from the stability provided by the Golden Horde during the climax of its power in the Lower Danubian region. The advantage of this security counted more for the traders than the severe taxation system introduced by the Golden Horde.

The ambitious policy of the first Angevin King of Hungary, Charles Robert (1308-1342), determined in 1324 an attempt of expansion of the Hungarian Kingdom east of the Carpathians, in order to prevent future attacks from the Tatars. In the army commanded by Phynta of Mende, the count of the Szeklers, fought also some Romanians from

⁹ Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 189-190; Alexandru Gonța, *România și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, p. 100.

¹⁰ Victor Spinei, "The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions", *The Golden Horde in World History. A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov, Marie Favereau, (Kazan: Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 2017), pp. 404-405.

¹¹ Virgil Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, vol. 20), (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 265-267.

¹² Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 214-215, 221-222; Gheorghe Postică, "The Medieval Fortifications of Orheiul Vechi. Archaeological Researches and Interpretations", *Fortifications and Defensive Systems East from the Carpathians. Strategies and Social Energies from Prehistory to the Middle Ages*, ed. Vasile Diaconu, (Brăila: Istros, 2021), pp. 249-277; Ludmila Bacumenco-Pîrnău, Vlad Vornic, "The Medieval Fortifications of Costești-Gârlea on the Botna River. Archaeological Discoveries and Hypothesis", *ibidem*, pp. 279-304.

Maramureș.¹³ The single result was the establishment of the control over one or several mountain passes (Oituz, Buzău), only for a short time, until the victory of the Walachian Voevode Basarab in the battle of 9-12 November 1330 against Charles Robert. Like the Bulgarian Tsar Michael Sisman, Basarab was a vassal of Khan Öz Beg (1313-1341), the most powerful ruler of the Golden Horde during the 14th century. He acted in the conflict with the Hungarian king in this quality of subject of the Tatar khan.¹⁴

The Tatars continued to attack Transylvania between 1331 and 1342, sometimes together with the Romanians subjected to them.¹⁵ It was only in 1345, when the Golden Horde entered in decline after the death of Öz Beg, that the new Hungarian King Ludovic of Anjou (1342-1382) started again the fight against the Tatars. His actions were planned according to the alliance established with Cazimir III, the King of Poland (1333-1370). It was a crusade that began in 1339, with the blessing of Pope Benedict XII (1334-1342) against the enemies of the Latin Christendom: the Tatars, but also their allies, the Lithuanians who were still pagans. In February 1345 it was launched the offensive through the passes of the Eastern Carpathians of the army commanded by Andrew Lákfi, the Count of the Szeklers (the brother of Stephen Lákfi, the Voevode of Transylvania). The Tatars were expelled beyond the Dniester, and their chief Atlamiș was killed (Atlamiș was perhaps the ruler of the region between Siret and Dniester). In 1346, the offensive was repeated, and a large booty was taken from the Tatars.¹⁶

¹³ Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen, Erster Band, 1191 bis 1342*, (Hermannstadt, 1892), p. 387; Alexandru Simon, “Principele Dominic, secuii și Țara de Jos a Moldovei, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “A. D. Xenopol”*, Iași, Vol. 51 (2014), Supliment (*Inovație și interdisciplinaritate în cercetarea arheologică și istorică: teorii, metode, surse*), pp. 59-76; Victor Spinei, “The Domination of the Golden Horde in the Romanian Regions”, p. 420.

¹⁴ Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 117-123; Virgil Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, pp. 269-278; Sergiu Iosipescu, *Carpații sud-estici în evul mediu târziu (1166-1526). O istorie europeană prin pasurile montane*, (Brăila: Editura Istros, 2013), pp. 116-117.

¹⁵ Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 127-128, 136-137.

¹⁶ Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum, I. Textus*. Eviderunt Elisabeth Galántai, Julius Kristó, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985), p. 166 (c. 136); *Chronicon Dubnicense cum codicibus Sambuci Acephalo et Vaticano, cronicisque Vindobonensi picto et Budensi accurate collatum... Recensuit et praefatus est M. Florianus*, (Leipzig, 1884), pp. 151-152 (c. 161, 162); Dimitre Onciul, “Dragoș și Bogdan, fundatorii Principatului moldovenesc”,

The army of Wallachia, commanded by the future Voevode Nicolae Alexandru, took part in these wars, because in 1344 this son of Basarab became the vassal of Ludovic of Anjou (and converted to the Catholic Church). The war of 1345 was the opportunity for an eastern expansion of the Wallachian state in the plains formerly mastered by the Tatars, at the same time with the annexion of a territory east of the Carpathians to the Hungarian Kingdom.¹⁷ After the campaigns of 1345-1346, a part of the present day Moldova passed from the Tatar domination to the Hungarian one. The Siret River was its border, but it is not excluded that it was extended up to Prut. The right of the Hungarian King over the territory conquered in 1345 was based on the title of King of Cumania assumed by his predecessors from the Arpadian dynasty, a title which became a reality only by this campaign of 1345. The former bishopric of

in Idem, *Scrieri istorice. Ediție critică îngrijită de Aurelian Sacerdoțeanu*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1968), Vol. I, pp. 115-117, 699; Constantin Cihodaru, "Observații cu privire la procesul de formare și de consolidare a statului feudal Moldova în sec. XI-XIV" (II), *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol"*, Iași, Vol. 17 (1980), 129; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 260-264; Maria Holban, "În jurul "Cronicii" arhidiaconului Ioan de Târnave (Küküllö) și informațiile privind pe români", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol"*, Iași, Vol. 21 (1984), pp. 93, 105-106; Radu Cârțumaru, "Concernant l'expédition hongroise au sud de la Moldavie (1345)", *Annales d'Université "Valahia" Târgoviște, Section d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2009), pp. 79-86; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 127-144; Sergiu Iosipescu, *Carpații sud-estici în evul mediu târziu (1166-1526). O istorie europeană prin pasurile montane*, pp. 151-158; Denis Căprăroiu, "Scurte considerații privind cronologia campaniilor anti-mongole ale regelui Ludovic de Anjou", *Revista de Istorie Militară*, Vol. 25, No. 3-4 (143-144) (2014), pp. 3-4; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate. Ediția a doua, adăugită*, (Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2014), pp. 86-89; Aleksandar Uzelac, "Атламиш – кумански цар из Српске Александриде (Atlamiš - Cuman Emperor from the Serbian Redaction of Alexander Romance)", *Homage to Tibor Živković. Editor Irena R. Svižanović (Споменница др Тибора Живковића, уредник Срђан Рудић)* (Историјског института Београд, Зборник радова, 32), (Belgrade, 2016), pp. 221-228.

¹⁷ Daniel Barbu, *Byzance, Rome et les Roumains. Essais sur la production politique de la foi au Moyen Âge*, (București: Babel, 1998), pp. 103-104; Marius Diaconescu, "The Political Relations between Wallachia and the Hungarian Kingdom during the Reign of the Anjou Kings", *Mediaevalia Transilvanica*, Satu Mare, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1998), pp. 22-23; Șerban Papacostea, "Triumful luptei pentru neatârnamare: întemeierea Moldovei și consolidarea statelor feudale românești", *Constituirea statelor feudale românești*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1980), pp. 172-177; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 138-143, 152-154; Sergiu Iosipescu, *Carpații sud-estici în evul mediu târziu (1166-1526). O istorie europeană prin pasurile montane*, p. 157.

Cumania, destroyed by the Mongols in 1241, was restored with the name *Milcovia*.¹⁸

The borderland established by Ludovic of Anjou on the valley of the Moldova River was ruled by a Romanian nobleman from Maramureș, Dragoș from Câmpulung pe Tisa (one of the knezates which composed the Voevodate of Maramureș). He is mentioned as such in the Moldavian annals from the 15th-16th centuries, in the interpolations made by Simion Dascălul and Misail Călugărul in the chronicle of Grigore Ureche), and in the writings of Miron Costin.¹⁹

The memory of Dragoș was also preserved in some popular traditions from northern Moldavia, and in toponyms like *Popasul lui Dragoș*, *Fântâna lui Dragoș*, *Dealul lui Dragoș*, *Dealul Dragoșimului*, *Drăgușeni*, *Dragoșa*.²⁰ The coming of Dragoș from Maramureș with his followers in that region liberated from the Tatar domination could be dated in 1347, according to the interpretations of Ștefan Sorin Gorovei,²¹ who,

¹⁸ Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 265-267; Flavius Solomon, “Episcopia Cumaniei-Episcopia Milcoviei. Două episoade din istoria relațiilor româno-maghiare”, *Studii istorice româno-ungare*, ed. Lucian Năstasă, (Iași, Fundația Academică “A. D. Xenopol, 1999), pp. 7-18; Mihai Dumitru Grigore, “Milcovia - episcopia capcană”, *Ortodoxia*, Vol. 52, No. 3-4 (2001), pp. 130-148; Răzvan Mihai Neagu, “Considerații privind diecezele catolice create de papii de la Avignon în exteriorul Carpaților: Episcopia Milcoviei și Episcopia de Siret”, *Tyragetia. Istorie, muzeologie. Muzeul Național de Istorie a Moldovei*, Chișinău, serie nouă, Vol. VIII (XXIII), No. 2 (2014), pp. 41-50.

¹⁹ *Letopisețul anonim al Moldovei* (or “de la Bistrița”); *Letopisețele I și II de la Putna; Cronica Moldo-Rusă; Cronica Sârbo-Moldovenească; Cronica Moldo-Polonă*, in *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan, ediție revăzută și completată de Petre P. Panaitescu*, (Cronicile medievale ale României, II), (București, Editura Academiei, 1959), pp. 6, 14, 43, 48, 55, 60, 156, 160, 168, 177, 189, 191); Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei. Ediție îngrijită, studiu introductiv indice și glosar de Petre P. Panaitescu*, (București, Editura de Stat pentru literatură și artă, 1955), pp. 63-67; Miron Costin, *Opere. Ediție critică cu un studiu introductiv, note, comentarii, variante, indice și glosar de Petre P. Panaitescu*, (București: Editura de Stat pentru literatură și artă, 1958), pp. 207, 209, 228-223, 260-261, 273.

²⁰ Simeon Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare române din Bucovina*, (București: Imprimeria Statului, 1895), pp. 40-81; Ela Cosma, *Ideea de întemeiere în cultura populară românească*, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa universitară clujeană, 2000), pp. 278-283; Ioan Scripcariuc, “Structuri administrative din Țara Moldovei. De la “marca” lui Dragoș voievod la ținutul Sucevei”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “A. D. Xenopol”*, Iași, Vol. 49 (2012), p. 9.

²¹ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate*, pp. 89-109, 294-304.

comparing the internal Moldavian traditions with the sources concerning the policy of Ludovic of Anjou, rejected with convincing demonstrations the years 1343²², 1352-1353²³ and 1359²⁴ sustained by other historians. The residence chosen by Dragoș was at Volovăț, near Rădăuți.²⁵

The territory beyond the Eastern Carpathians was not organized as a county or a banat. It was only a *terra* administrated by the Romanians from Maramureș who took part in the war. This small region was a new form of colonization of people from Transylvania of different ethnic origins (Saxons, Szeklers, Hungarians, Romanians). The future state of Moldova took its name from the river that flows in Siret, by the extension of the meaning: from the small area along the river to the greater country that emerged from that kernel. In the same way, the town Baia was also called *Civitas Moldaviensis*. The territory given to Dragoș was this *terra*

²² Dimitre Onciul, “Dragoș și Bogdan, fundatorii Principatului moldovenesc”, pp. 127, 705-706.

²³ Petre P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1969), pp. 318-320; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, p. 302; Constantin C. Giurescu, *Târguri sau orașe și cetăți moldovene din secolul al X-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea*, ediția a II-a, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), p. 63; Radu Popa, *Țara Maramureșului în veacul al XIV-lea*, ed. a 2-a de Adrian Ioniță, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), pp. 225-226.

²⁴ Dimitre Onciul, “Dragoș și Bogdan, fundatorii Principatului moldovenesc”, pp. 674-680; Ioan Mihaly de Apșa, *Diplome maramureșene din secolele XIV și XV*. Ediția a III-a. Ediție și note biografice Vasile Iuga de Săliște, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura societății culturale pro Maramureș “Dragoș Vodă”, 2002), p. 15 (footnote 2); Aurelian Sacerdoțeanu, “Succesiunea domnilor Moldovei până la Alexandru cel Bun. Pe baza documentelor din secolul al XIV-lea și a cronicilor românești din secolul al XV-lea și al XVI-lea, scrise în limba slavonă”, *Romanoslavica*, Vol. 11 (1965), p. 228; Șerban Papacostea, “Triumful luptei pentru neatârnare: întemeierea Moldovei și consolidarea statelor feudale românești”, pp. 180-181; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 297, 301-307; Radu Cârțiumaru, “Dragoș - Sas - Balc. Variații pe marginea unor probleme controversate”, *Arheologie și istorie în spațiul carpato-balcanic*, ed. Denis Căprăroiu, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2011), p. 216.

²⁵ Dimitre Onciul, “Dragoș și Bogdan, fundatorii Principatului moldovenesc”, pp. 125-126; Petre P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești*, p. 322; Constantin Cihodaru, “Observații cu privire la procesul de formare și de consolidare a statului feudal Moldova în sec. XI-XIV” (II), p. 131; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, p. 308; Costică Asăvoaie, “Prima reședință domnească a Țării Moldovei”, *Arheologia Moldovei*, Vol. 22 (1999 (2002)), pp. 117-123; Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, a. 1324-1881, vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, (București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2001), pp. 417-418; Ștefan S. Gorovei, “Biserica de la Volovăț și mormântul lui Dragoș Vodă”, *Biserica. O lecție de istorie. Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt (1504-2004)*, (Putna: Editura Mușatinii, 2004), pp. 135-146.

Moldauana or *Molduana*, as it was named in the documents of 20 March 1360 and 2 February 1365: the region near the Moldova River.²⁶ The expression *terra nostra* reflects its inclusion in the Hungarian Kingdom (*de jure*, Moldova was considered a possession of this kingdom until the reign of Mattia Corvinus).²⁷ New towns developed at Rădăuți, Siret, Suceava, Bacău, Neamț, Roman. In that period after 1345 appeared most of the toponymes and hydronimes of Hungarian origin from Moldova, such as *Adjud, Baia, Bacău, Suceava, Trotuș, Hârlău, Orhei*.²⁸ Among these placenames, the etymology of Orhei caused many debates. The most probable solution is the origin from *Örhely*, which means “guarding place”, not from *várhegy* (“the hill of the city”). This means that in that point was initially a watching place later transformed into a larger fortification.²⁹

The second period of the liberation of the territory dominated by the Golden Horde began in March – April 1352, when the Tatars were defeated by the new Hungarian-Polish coalition, established after the renewal of the Tatar attacks against Poland. After this victory, Khan Jani Beg (1342-1357) made peace with the Hungarian and Polish kings (his main effort was directed to the conquest of Tabriz). The Hungarian attacks against the Tatars were resumed in 1354-1355.³⁰ In these circumstances it

²⁶ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, “În jurul întemeierii statelor românești” (III), *Revista Istorică, serie nouă*, Vol. 4, No. 5-6 (1993), p. 598; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 44-46; Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, a. 1324-1881, vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 416.

²⁷ Șerban Papacostea, “La fondation de la Valachie et de la Moldavie et les Roumains de Transylvanie: une nouvelle source”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1978), pp. 392-393; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate*, pp. 148-149; Alexandru Pinzar, *Hotarul de nord al Moldovei (de la formare, în secolul al XIV-lea, până la statornicirea lui pe Ceremuș, Colacin și Nistru)*, (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2016), pp. 85-87.

²⁸ For the colonizations and the names of the cities, see: Constantin C. Giurescu, *Târguri sau orașe și cetăți moldovene din secolul al X-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea*, pp. 84-91, 184-197; Constantin Cihodaru, “Observații cu privire la procesul de formare și de consolidare a statului feudal Moldova în sec. XI-XIV” (II), pp. 119-122; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, p. 200.

²⁹ Adrian Andrei Rusu, *Ștefan cel Mare și moldovenii din vremea sa*, (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2022), p. 133. The etymology from *várhegy* was proposed by Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale. Vol. IV: Les chevaliers*, (Bucarest, 1937), p. 184.

³⁰ *Anonymi Dubnicensis liber de rebus gestis Ludovici R. Hung. 1345-1355*, in *Analecta monumentorum Hungariae historicorum literariorum maximum inedita quae collegit*,

was established a stable domination in *terra Moldavana*. The Alan warriors entered the service of the new masters after the defeat of the Tatars, with the same function of guarding the borders, becoming members of the Moldavian noble families, like that Iațco recorded at the end of the 14th century (his name comes from the Slavic form of the name *Iași*).³¹

After the murder of Jani Beg in 1357, the Golden Horde entered a period of internal fights until 1363, which enabled the competition between Hungary, Poland and Lithuania for its territories west of the Bug River. The Lithuanian duke Algirdas (or Olgierd) (1345-1377) obtained a great victory at Sinie Vody on the Bug River in 1363, opening the period of expansion of his state to the Black Sea.³²

In the same year 1363, the Hungarian Kingdom lost the control over the *terra Moldavana*. Another Romanian nobleman from Maramureș, Bogdan from Cuhea, who was for a long time in conflict with the Hungarian authorities, entered there and expelled Balç, the representative of the Hungarian king. Bogdan became thus the first voevode of this region

*recensuit et partim typis commendavit Franciscus Toldy ac commentariis, epilogo et indice aucta publici iuris facienda curavit G. Érszegi, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), pp. 110-111; Chronicon Dubnicense cum codicibus Sambuci Acephalo et Vaticano, cronicisque Vindobonensi picto et Budensi accurate collatum, pp. 164-165, 167-168 (c. 170, 173); Chronicon Budense. Post elapsos ab editione prima et rarissima tercentos sexaginta quinque annos, secundam adornavit, textum recognovit (...) Iosephus Podhradczky (...), (Buda, 1838), p. 320; Petre P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești*, p. 318; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 268-272; Șerban Papacostea, "Triumful luptei pentru neatârnare: întemeierea Moldovei și consolidarea statelor feudale românești", p. 169; Virgil Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, p. 218; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 148-155; Sergiu Iosipescu, *Carpații sud-estici în evul mediu târziu (1166-1526). O istorie europeană prin pasurile montane*, pp. 161-166; Denis Căprăroiu, "Scurte considerații privind cronologia campaniilor anti-mongole ale regelui Ludovic de Anjou", p. 3-5; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate*, pp. 89, 100-101.*

³¹ Virgil Ciocîltan, "Alanii și începuturile statelor românești", pp. 949-950.

³² Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, pp. 136-137; Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 273-279; Gheorghe I. Brătianu, "În jurul întemeierii statelor românești" (III), pp. 377, 599; Șerban Papacostea, "Triumful luptei pentru neatârnare: întemeierea Moldovei și consolidarea statelor feudale românești", p. 183; Radu Popa, *Țara Maramureșului în veacul al XIV-lea*, pp. 226-229; Alexandru Gonța, *Românii și Hoarda de Aur, 1241-1502*, pp. 158-159; Ioan Scripcariuc, "Structuri administrative din Țara Moldovei. De la "marca" lui Dragoș voievod la ținutul Sucevei", p. 12; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate*, pp. 95-98, 298-304. The date of the battle was disputed. Some works support the year 1362.

on the Moldova valley, the kernel of the Moldavian state, liberated from the Hungarian domination.³³

Turning to the question of the liberation from the Golden Horde domination of the territory up to the Dniester, it is necessary to mention the disputed question of the region dominated by one of the commanders defeated at Sinie Vody: *Demetrius princeps Tartarorum*, as it is called in a charter from 22nd June 1368 issued by Ludovic of Anjou concerning the trade between his subjects and the city of Kronstadt (Braşov). Now it is certain that his residence was the city of Şehr al-Djedid (Orheiul Vechi), and that this city was abandoned by the Golden Horde around 1369, most probable as a consequence of the Lithuanian offensives.³⁴

The citadel of Orheiul Vechi was afterward integrated into the defensive system of the Moldavian state, but we do not know exactly how. The Tatars who remained in different areas of Moldova became the slaves of the voevodes (the first Tatar dependent settlement in Moldavia (at Baia) was recorded in a donation made on 31 October 1402 by the Voievode Alexandru the Good to the Monastery of Moldoviţa).³⁵

Cetatea Albă was conquered by Lithuania after 1363. The liberation from the Tatar domination of the territory between eastern Carpathians and Dniester was completed only when the Moldavian state acquired its main gate to the world, Cetatea Albă, the end of the road connecting Poland and Lithuania with the Black Sea. This happened

³³ Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 309-325; Radu Cărciumaru, “Despre revolta lui Bogdan din Cuhea și consecințele sale asupra evoluției Țării Maramureșului la mijlocul veacului al XIV-lea”, *Revista de Istorie Militară*, Vol. 23, No. 3-4 (131-132) (2012), pp. 93-98.

³⁴ Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, pp. 275-276; Matei Cazacu, “À propos de l’expansion polono-lituanienne au nord de la mer Noire aux XIVE-XVE siècles. Czarnigrad, la “Cité Noire” de l’embouchure du Dniestr”, *Passé turco-tatar, présent soviétique. Études offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, éd. C. Lemerrier-Quelquejey, G. Veistein, S.E. Wimbush, (Louvain, Paris, Peeters, 1986), pp. 99-122; Gheorghe Postică, “Citadela medievală a Orheiului Vechi și problema localizării centrului politic al principelui Dimitrie din anii 60 ai secolului al XIV-lea”, *History & Politics, Universitatea Liberă Internațională din Moldova*, Chișinău, Vol. 1, No. 1-2 (2008), pp. 133-142; Gheorghe Postică, Valeriu Kavruk, *Orheiul Vechi. Archaeological Landscape*, (Chișinău: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova, 2018), pp. 43-45.

³⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica. A. Moldova, volumul I (1384-1448)*. Volum întocmit de C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu și L. Simanschi, (București: Editura Academiei, 1975), p. 223, nr. 16.

around 1377-1378, when, most probable by an agreement, it was abandoned the Lithuanian domination established there after 1363.³⁶

³⁶ Ștefan Andreescu, "Note despre Cetatea Albă", *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, Vol. 18 (2000), pp. 57-69; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate*, pp. 208-218; Vitalie Josanu, *Monument al civilizației medievale românești la Marea cea Mare: Cetatea Albă – Moncastro*, (București: Editura Fundația Collegium XXI, 2014), pp. 177-179; Alessandro Flavio Dumitrașcu, *Genova, Dunărea de Jos și Moldova în secolele XIII-XV*, (Brăila: Istros, 2021), pp. 39-44.

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THE OTTOMAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST BELGRADE (1521): THE WALLACHIAN AND MOLDAVIAN RESPONSE TO THE SULTAN'S ORDERS

Ovidiu CRISTEA*

Abstract

The article focuses on a particular aspect – the military obligations – of the relations between the Ottoman Empire and two of its tributary states, Wallachia and Moldavia. Starting with the first decades of the 15th century (Wallachia) and, respectively, the second half of the 15th century (Moldavia) both principalities were expected to join the Ottoman troops during their expedition in Central-Eastern Europe. However, there were situations when Wallachia and Moldavia have circumvented their obligation invoking several arguments for the impossibility of fulfilling the received orders. It was the case with the military campaign led by Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent against Belgrade (1521) when both Neagoe Basarab of Wallachia and Stephen the Younger of Moldavia were requested to join the Ottoman troops with their armies and both failed to execute the orders. Despite the specificity of the context for each of the aforementioned realms, the arguments and the diplomatic strategy used by the princes shared many common points. Neagoe and Stephen claimed that if they had joined the Ottoman troops their countries would have been exposed to attack from their neighbours (the Szeklers – in case of Wallachia; the Tatars or the Poles – in case of Moldavia). The princes also used the mediation of a trusted Ottoman dignitary to support their claims and to convince the sultan that they would remain loyal to the Porte despite their lack of participation in the war against Hungary. Eventually, it seems that the sultan accepted the fact; it was however an exceptional situation that would not be repeated during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Keywords: Moldavia, Neagoe Basarab, Ottoman Empire, Stephen the Younger, Wallachia.

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Introduction

Usually, the wars between the Ottoman Empire and the Romanian Principalities were a favourite topic of the Romanian historiography. The conflicts with the Porte are seen as one of the most glorious pages of the Romanian medieval history but less attention was paid to the military collaboration between the empire and its vassals and, especially, to the participation of the Wallachian and Moldavian troops in the Ottoman campaigns.¹

The practice seems to have been initiated in the 15th century, during the reign of Murad II² (a previous episode concerning the presence of the Wallachian troops at the battle of Ankara seems problematic)³, when several sources mention the participation of Wallachian troops in some expeditions directed against the Hungarian Kingdom and in one case it seems that Moldavian units were also involved.⁴ However, the first certain participation of Moldavia in an Ottoman expedition took place in 1462 when Stephen the Great joined an Ottoman fleet which besieged the fortress of Kilia.⁵ In the 16th century, the involvement of both principalities

¹ For an overview see Ovidiu Cristea, “The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns”, *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, eds. Gábor Kármán, Lovro Kunčević, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 253-274.

² Virgil Ciociltan, “Între sultan și împărat: Vlad Dracul în 1438” [Between Sultan and Emperor: Vlad the Devil in 1438] *Revista de Istorie*, Vol. 29, No. 11 (1976), pp. 1767-1790.

³ Aurel Decei, “A participat Mircea cel Bătrân la lupta de la Ankara?” [Did Mircea the Elder take part in the battle of Ankara?], in A. Decei, *Relații româno-orientale* [The Relations between Romanians and the Oriental world], (Bucharest: Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978), pp. 9-14.

⁴ Ovidiu Cristea, “The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns”, pp. 257-258; see also Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria Magdalena Szekely, “Old Questions. Old Clichés. New Approaches, New Results? The Case of Moldavia”, *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans*, ed. Oliver Jens Schmitt, (Vienna: OAW, 2016), p. 218 and n. 43 who justly correct the name of the Moldavian prince involved in the event.

⁵ For this episode and the discussion of sources see Șerban Papacostea, “Comerț, alianțe și acțiune militară în politica lui Ștefan cel Mare la începuturile domniei 1457-1462” [Trade, Alliances and Military actions in Stephen the Great's Policy at the beginning of his reign, 1457-1462], *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Atlas al Credinței Creștine*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2004), pp. 445-455 (452-453); Liviu Pilat and Ovidiu Cristea, *The Ottoman threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th century*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 131-132.

on Ottoman campaigns in Central-Eastern Europe became current practice. It is a question, however, if the Wallachian and Moldavian units had a significant military role on the field of battle⁶ or, rather, their presence in the Ottoman camp was a mark of loyalty towards the sultan. The following example, the expedition of Süleyman the Magnificent against Belgrade (1521) could shed some insights on the relations between the Porte and its vassals in the north of the Danube especially in case when the aforementioned tributaries did not fulfil their obligations. Such failure to carry out their military obligations was a serious matter as the first campaigns of his reign Süleyman the Magnificent played an essential part in consolidating the prestige of the Ottoman ruler at the beginning of his reign.⁷

1. Wallachia

In the first month of 1521, the key word for the Lower Danube region seems to have been fear. The preparation of an Ottoman campaign cast anxiety among the polities in the region as there was no clue of the sultan's target. A letter of a Wallachian informant, a certain Neacșu of Cîmpulung, sent to the mayor (*bürgermeister*) of Brașov (Kronstadt) in Transylvania, announced that the Ottoman fleet already entered the Danube and headed towards Belgrade and that the Voivode of Wallachia, Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521) feared the Bey of Nicopolis, Mehmed Mihaloğlu more than his Transylvanian neighbours.⁸ The label “robber” (*lotru*) attached to the name of Mehmed Bey amplifies the fear mirrored by the letter. The emotion was probably intensified by some bad omens mentioned by the sources. Sometimes in May or the beginning of June, there was an earthquake that affected Wallachia and southern Transylvania⁹ and, according to a Wallachian chronicle, in the same month

⁶ See, for instance the case of the battle of Başkent (1473) where the Wallachian troops were placed on the left wing commanded by Prince Mustafa see Ovidiu Cristea and Nagy Pienaru, “Țara Românească, Moldova și bătălia de la Başkent”, [Wallachia, Moldavia and the Battle of Başkent], *Analele Putnei*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2012), 1, p. 17-36.

⁷ Nevin Zeynep Yelçe, *The Making of Sultan Süleyman: A Study of Process/es of Image-Making and Reputation Management*, Ph. D. Dissertation (Sabancı University, 2009), pp. 178-179.

⁸ *Documenta Romaniae Historica B. Țara Românească*, Vol. II (1521-1525), ed. Ștefan Ștefănescu and Olimpia Diaconescu, (Bucharest: Academiei, 1972) doc. 209, pp. 402-403.

⁹ Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* [Documents concerning Romanian history], Vol. XV/1 (1358-1600), (Bucharest: Socec, 1911), doc. 456, pp. 251-252. (henceafter Hurmuzaki, *Documente*)

appeared a great and marvellous sign in the sky in the form of a human face.¹⁰ According to the medieval mind, such premonitory signs were a clear sign of God's displeasure and, in context; one may assume that the Ottoman forthcoming campaign was considered as a divine punishment for the Christians' sins.

The word "fear" used by Neacșu also suggests a relation of power between Neagoe Basarab and Mehmed Mihaloğlu in which the Wallachian Voivode was certainly the weakest part. According to Neacșu, in 1521 the Wallachian anxiety was amplified by Mehmed's intentions to pass through Wallachia and to attack Transylvania.¹¹ It was sultan's explicit demand, which, nevertheless, casted some doubts about Ottomans' real intentions. For Neacșu, who gathered information from all sort of reliable informants (among them some relatives), there were solid evidence that the sultan prepared an attack against Hungary along with the aforementioned order received by Mehmed Bey to attack Transylvania: the main Ottoman army gathered in Sofia, a number of Ottoman ships had sailed up the Danube towards Belgrade and a number of workers and artisans were sent to facilitate the passage of ships in a very narrow segment of Danube.

To be sure, Neacșu's letter is a marginal testimony for any attempt to reconstruct the Ottoman expedition against Belgrade. However, for Wallachia, it mirrors the gravity of the Ottoman menace, a constant in the reign of Neagoe Basarab. Even if the letter is not an "official" point of view, it suggests that, in relation to the Ottoman threat, the lord of Wallachia was a mere shadow. Neacșu gives no hint about Neagoe Basarab's intentions with respect to the Ottoman campaign and the only detail is the "fear" which seemed to have overwhelmed the prince. Yet, there are some other sources, which point to the reaction of the Wallachian principality to the forthcoming Ottoman campaign. On one hand, the Voivode took care to send news to King Louis II of Hungary at least from the beginning of summer. On 11 June, the king mentions a Wallachian emissary – Dragomir – sent by Neagoe Basarab to Buda with information

¹⁰ *Cronicari munteni* [Wallachian Chroniclers], ed. Dan Horia Mazilu, (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2004) p. 267. The chronicle added that in the same month passed away the Voivode of Moldavia Bogdan III but it is difficult to say if the narrator made a direct connection between the prince death and the aforementioned omens.

¹¹ Rumours about Mehmed Mihaloğlu intentions to attack Transylvania already circulated from the beginning in May 1521 see Hurmuzaki, *Documente* XV/1, doc. 452, p. 250

about the sultan's intentions.¹² Unfortunately, the King provides no detail on the content of the news and it may be only underlined that the Wallachian Voivode took care to inform Louis II about the imminent Ottoman expedition. Thus, the Voivode accomplished a provision of a treaty signed with Hungary on 17 March 1517, which also stipulated that both realms had to provide military support each other in case of necessity. Nevertheless, in respect with the Ottoman Empire, the Voivode stated that he would provide military support "if there will be any chance to stand against the infidels" but, on the contrary, if the Ottoman army would be overwhelmingly superior the Wallachian lord was only indebted to provide accurate information about the sultan forces and their presumed target.¹³ Therefore, Neagoe Basarab maintained a good relationship with Hungary and the Catholic world without making a firm commitment against the Ottoman Empire. Wallachia avoided a clash with the Turks without an infringement of the treaty sealed with King Louis II.

On the other hand, as one might suspect, as a vassal of the Sublime Porte, Wallachia had also to fulfil some obligations. In 1521, the preparation of a war against Hungary was followed by orders sent by Süleyman the Magnificent to Neagoe Basarab in Wallachia and Stephen the Younger in Moldavia to join the Ottoman camp. The Wallachian internal documents provide no detail concerning the sultan's call to arms. The documents issued during 1521 by the princely chancery make no allusion to the imminent danger and deal with usual issues (donations for boyars and monastic foundations, property issues, confirmation of previous donations)¹⁴ while a chronicle – the so-called Chronicle of Băleanu family – mentions briefly that Sultan Selim I (sic) conquered Belgrade and after that he passed away and was followed by his son, Sultan Süleyman.¹⁵

¹² Hurmuzaki, *Documente XV/1*, doc. 455, p. 251.

¹³ An edition of the treaty in Grigore Tocilescu (ed.), *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la relațiile cu Ardealul* [534 Slavonic and Romanian documents from Wallachia and Moldavia concerning the Relations with Transylvania], (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1931), doc. 271, pp. 261-264 (263 for the quotation).

¹⁴ The five documents issued in 1521 are published in *Documenta Romaniae Historica B. Țara Românească*, Vol. II (1521-1525), doc. 205-208 and 210, pp. 396-402 and 403-405.

¹⁵ *Cronicari munteni* p. 268.

However, an Ottoman document shed some interesting insights on Neagoe Basarab's reaction to the sultan's order in 1521. A letter sent by Mehmed Mihaloğlu to the Grand Vizier, Piri Mehmed Pasha, summarizes a dialogue between the Bey of Nicopolis and the lord of Wallachia. According to Mehmed Bey, Neagoe's intention was to obey and to join the Ottoman army with all the Wallachian troops. However, the prince argued that there were some serious impediments; he was ill and his son and successor was a youngster unable to lead an army. As a result, Neagoe appointed as commanders some of his most important boyars: his *beilerbey* (probably the governor/*mare ban* of Craiova or the *spatharios*), his treasurer and one of his brothers.¹⁶

The document also mirrors some serious concerns on the neighbours' attitude towards the forthcoming war. According to it, Neagoe would have claimed that "When the army of Wallachia will leave the realm, then the Szeklers located <at the border> between Moldova and Transylvania will be able to attack Wallachia. The Voivode of Moldavia, also, is a tributary subject of his majesty the emperor (= the sultan). Let him also be ordered that when we start from here against Transylvania, the Voivode of Moldavia, in turn, should go against the Szeklers so that the Szeklers cannot enter Wallachia."¹⁷

Neagoe's arguments are interesting for more than one reason. The claim that joining the Ottoman army would leave Wallachia without any defence against an attack from Transylvania was already used in 1492 by another prince Vlad *Călugărul* ("the Monk") (1482-1495) when he was asked by Sultan Bayezid II to join an Ottoman army directed against Hungary. In 1492, Vlad's excuse was accepted by the sultan who considered the reply as a fair argument.¹⁸

Twenty years later Neagoe used a similar discursive strategy even if his mission, as it is suggested by the abovementioned document, was to attack Transylvania together with Mehmed Mihaloğlu units. Other arguments – the prince's illness and his son's inability to assume the

¹⁶ The document was published in *Documente turcești privind istoria României* [Turkish Documents Concerning the History of Romania], I. 1455-1474, ed. Mustafa A. Mehmed, (Bucharest: Academiei, 1976), doc. 12, p. 12-14.

¹⁷ *Documente turcești*, doc. 12, p. 13.

¹⁸ The episod is mirrored in one of the bailo Geronimo Marcello's reports of 1492; for an analysis see Ovidiu Cristea, *Acest Domn de la Miazănoapte* [A Prince from Afar], (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2018), pp. 235-236.

command – may be also seen as excuses. However, in both cases, there are other testimonies who confirm Neagoe's claim. Eventually, the disease ended Neagoe's life in September 1521 and his son lost quickly the throne due to his young age.

Very interesting is also the following point in which Neagoe's asked that his Moldavian neighbour should also join the campaign against Transylvania. The demand could suggest that Stephen the Younger was exempted by the Porte to join the campaign against Belgrade but the existing evidence points to the contrary. Thus, Neagoe's request may be considered as a sign of a tense relation or, at least, distrust between Wallachia and Moldavia or a sort of insurance for the Wallachian prince that the Porte will treat equally both realms. At the same time, it is also possible that both Voivodes tried to gain time and to postpone the fulfilment of their duty to muster their armies and to join the Ottoman camp. From this perspective, the invocation of the lack of reaction of the Moldavian prince may be seen as an excuse for Neagoe to explain his slowness to comply with the sultan's orders. Finally, the prince of Wallachia requested a twenty days delay for the gathering of his army claiming that he received the sultan's order too late. Mehmed Mihaloğlu letter seemed to support Neagoe Basarab's statement. Not only he endorsed the Voivode's arguments but also he asked the grand vizier for further instructions concerning the following campaign.

Despite the fact that, in the document, Neagoe's voice is mediated by that of the powerful Bey of Nicopolis, one may identify some arguments used by previous princes of Wallachia. Unfortunately, the text does not specify what the strength of Wallachia's army should have been. On 26 April 1520, Neagoe claimed in a letter directed to the Saxon town of Braşov in Transylvania, that he is able to muster 40,000 men men-at-arms in case of a crusade against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ The amount seems exaggerated but other testimonies point to a similar number. On 30 June 1521, a letter of the King Louis II of Hungary to Henry VIII mentioned, among other details, that the Wallachian Voivode (*Valachie Prefectus*) with a force of 40,000 men was prepared to join Mehmed Bey in an attack against Transylvania.²⁰ A day before, in a letter to Pope Leon X the same

¹⁹ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* XV/1, 243, doc. 443.

²⁰ Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* [Documents concerning Romanian history], vol. II/3 (1510-1530), (Bucharest: Socec, 1892) doc. 255, pp. 361-363 (362).

king estimated at 80,000 men the joint Ottoman-Wallachian force prepared to invade Transylvania.²¹

Unfortunately, the lack of consistent and accurate data makes impossible any realistic estimation of the Wallachian military might in the first decades of the 16th century. Despite the lack of any reference to the Wallachian manpower, Mehmed Bey's letter mentions an important aspect of Wallachia's military obligations towards the Porte. As the document suggests, the prince of Wallachia had to lead himself the realms' troops in case that the sultan assumed the command of the Ottoman army. For this reason, in 1521, Neagoe tried to explain why he was unable to fulfil his duty; his plea was supported by the Bey of Nicopolis an old ally of the prince who, in context, seem to act as a sort of mediator between the Voivode of Wallachia and the grand vizier.

All in all, there is no supplementary evidence to know if, in the end, the Wallachian army was mustered and if it played any part in the campaign in Hungary. A Moldavian source mentions that Neagoe Basarab and Mehmed Bey attacked Transylvania²² but there are no other signs for such an expedition against the neighbouring principality in 1521. Also, the Wallachian involvement in the siege and conquest of Belgrade although plausible, left no traces in the contemporary documents. In spite of many unknown details, the Mehmed Mihaloğlu letter is important because it shows some stratagems used by a prince of Wallachia to postpone or even to avoid the fulfilment of his military obligation as a vassal. The use of an Ottoman dignitary as mediator was an able diplomatic manoeuvre aimed to avoid any possible suspicion of disloyalty; at the same time, the skilful use of a traditional argument (the realm's vulnerability in case of the attack from Transylvania) and the emphasis put on some unfavourable details (the prince's illness; the young age of his son; the difficulty to raise quickly the necessary troops) represented strong points to justify the slowness with which the sultan's order was carried out.

²¹ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* II/3, doc. 254, p. 359-361. The letter to the Pope does not refer to the Wallachian participation.

²² "Bassaraba voyevoda primores suos et exercitum cum Mahometo contra Sacculos missit". The information is mentioned by the Moldavian ambassador at the Polish court in 1522. The text was published by Hurmuzaki, *Documente* II/3, doc. 458, p. 714 and Mihai Costăchescu (ed.), *Documente moldovenești de la Ștefăniță voivod (1517-1527)*, (Iași: Brawo, 1945), doc. 112, p. 541.

Eventually, Neagoe's policy was followed by his son-in law and successor Radu of Afumați (several reigns between 1522-1529) who tried to preserve his country's autonomy between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. However, from the end of Radu's reign, Wallachia became an insignificant military actor, a situation changed only at the end of the 16th century during the reign of Michael the Brave (1593-1601) in a different and very complicated context.

2. Moldavia

Like his Wallachian neighbour, the prince of Moldavia, Stephen the Younger (1517-1527) had in 1521 an ambivalent attitude. He sent information both to the sultan and to the Kings of Hungary and Poland and he tried to avoid fulfilling his military obligations to the Porte. The documents containing the news directed by Stephen to Hungary and Poland were not preserved but there are several letters in which Sigismund I of Poland expressed his gratitude towards Stephen for the transmitted information.²³ We ignore how accurate and detailed were the news sent by the Moldavian prince but it is certain that he mentioned the preparation of the Tatars to join the Ottoman army at the sultan's request.²⁴

Stephen also sent news to the Porte concerning the preparations made by the King of Hungary and Poland. Sometimes, in the second part of 1520 or the first months of the following year, the voivode informed that the King of Hungary summoned the most important barons of his kingdom to decide the measures to be taken, while the King of Poland undertook a similar step but it was unclear if the gathering concerned the forthcoming Ottoman- Hungarian war or the Polish relations with Muscovy.²⁵

Several months later, the information was more detailed. The King of Hungary was in Buda but there was no sign that he intended to gather an army. However, troops were mustered by the voivode of Transylvania but it was not known for what purpose. The King of Poland assembled his army south of Cracow even to attack Moldavia or, more probable, to confront the Tatars. At that moment, the Khan of Crimea seemed to be a matter of concern also for the voivode of Moldavia. At the end of his

²³ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* II/3, doc. 251-253, p. 358-359.

²⁴ Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/3, doc. 253, p. 359

²⁵ *Documente turcești*, doc. 10, p. 11.

report, Stephen argued that a great Tatar army was close to the Moldavian border a fact that compelled him to defend his Eastern frontier. According to the prince, a clear sign of Khan's hostility was the fact that a Moldavian ambassador sent several months before in Crimea was imprisoned a gesture which was considered an implicit declaration of war. To strengthen his argument Stephen ended his message by stating that "the Sublime Porte must know that they (= the Tatars) are our old enemies."²⁶

The Tatar issue seems to play an important part in the prince's discourse. In the following period, it will be the main argument in a very complicated and dangerous political game played by the voivode of Moldavia who, in 1521, refused to carry out the sultan's order to attack the Szekler region in Transylvania. In a petition addressed to the sultan at the end of the summer, Stephen the Younger tried to justify his conduct during the Ottoman expedition against Belgrade. The voivode acknowledged that he received several times the order to gather his army and to attack Transylvania and added that his intimate desire was to please his sovereign, Sultan Süleyman. Unfortunately, the hostile attitude of the Tatars who, at that time, were prepared to invade Moldavia forced Stephen to reconsider his actions. He was forced to abandon the attack against the Szeklers and to direct his troops to contain the Tatars' menace.

"In doing so", added the prince, "We happened to ignore the sultan's order. But we are <nevertheless> the sincere and devoted subjects of the illustrious Emperor <i.e. the Sultan>, whom we have always served justly since the reigns of our father and grandfather, and since we have no other place and no other shelter but the Sublime Porte."²⁷

The mention of the Voivode's father (Bogdan III) and grandfather (Stephen the Great) seem to be a part of a discursive strategy aimed to convince the Porte of the Voivode's loyalty. Stephen the Great was praised by the Porte for his political and military deeds²⁸ while Bogdan III was

²⁶ *Documente turcești*, doc. 11, p. 12.

²⁷ Tahsin Gemil, "Din relațiile moldo-otomane în primul sfert al secolului al XVI-lea. Pe marginea a două documente din arhivele de la Istanbul" [Episodes of the Ottoman-Moldavian relations in the first quarter of the 16th century: two Documents preserved in the Archives of Istanbul], *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol"*, Vol. 9 (1972), pp. 133-144 (142); a slightly different translation in *Documente turcești*, doc. 13, p. 15.

²⁸ See for instance the text of Theodor Spandugino, *Discorso di Theodoro Spandugino Cantacusino gentiluomo Constantinopolitano della origine de principi turchi* in

indeed loyal to the Ottoman Empire and, moreover, was inspired enough to support Prince Selim rebellion against his father Sultan Bayezid II.²⁹ Thus, in 1521, Stephen the Younger tried to enforce his precarious position by invoking two rulers who were loyal vassals to the Porte.³⁰ The following argument tried also to convince Süleyman the Magnificent of the Voivode's good faith. Stating that Moldavia had no other shelter than the Sublime Porte was a way to convince the sultan that the principality had no significant political relations with the Christian Kingdoms. Finally, Stephen tried to gain the sultan's benevolence including, in the last part of his petition, news about the situation in Hungary, Transylvania and Poland and by congratulating the sultan for the military successes in 1521.

What was Sultan Süleyman's reply to Stephen's plea? There is no direct evidence of how the Porte reacted to an attitude that could have been considered defiant. The simple fact that Stephen the Younger remained prince of Moldavia until his premature death in 1527 seems to suggest that, in the end, the Porte accepted at least in part the submitted arguments. Fortunately, there are some insights provided by some contemporary sources. For instance, an embassy of Moldavia sent probably in 1522 at the Polish court provides interesting details on a long and tortuous process of negotiations between Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire, which began before the siege and conquest of Belgrade.

According to the Moldavian emissary, the boyar Luca Cârje³¹, in the first months of 1521 the Grand Vizier, Piri Mehmed Pasha, instructed a Moldavian ambassador in Istanbul to send to the Voivode of Moldavia a clear message: if he wanted to preserve the sultan's benevolence, he had to carry out the orders he received. The Grand Vizier's message raised

Francesco Sansovino, *Dell'Historia universale dell'origine et imperio de Turchi*, (Venetia, 1554), 200v-201r.; for an English version see Theodor Spandounes, *On the Origin of the Ottoman Emperors*, ed. Donald M. Nicol, (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 46.

²⁹ Manole Neagoe, "Contribuții la problema aservirii Moldovei față de Imperiul Otoman. Înțelegerea dintre Bogdan cel Orb și Selim din anul 1512" [Contributions to the submission of Moldavia to Ottoman Empire. The Accord between Bogdan III and Prince Selim in 1512], *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1964), pp. 311-322.

³⁰ Obviously, for Stephen the Great the conclusion applies only for the last part of his reign 1486-1504.

³¹ For his boyar and his diplomatic abilities see Maria Magdalena Székely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș* [Prince Petru Rareș' advisors], (Iași: Universitatea "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2002), pp. 239-240.

concern among the Moldavian elite. In the end, the prince and his boyars decided to send troops against the Tatars to have a justification for the failure to execute the sultan's orders. However, when the expedition against Belgrade was launched a messenger of the sultan renewed the previous demand: "You, Voivode Stephen, you must go with your army in our support against the Sezklers' county and with you will be <Neagoe> Basarab the Wallachian prince and also Mehmed the sangeacbey of Nicopolis."³²

The renewed order provoked grief among the prince and his boyars and they struggled to find a solution to excuse themselves. Eventually, according to the same Luca Cârje, they decided to invoke, once again, the Tatar menace and they added, as an argument, many gifts (precious fabrics, money, and horses) to appease the sultan's anger.³³ Still, after two more weeks a new *çavus* brought a new order from the sultan who requested the Moldavian military assistance for the war against Hungary. Once again, the Voivode expressed his impossibility to comply with the received order and supported his plea with new gifts.

Nevertheless, the diplomatic duel continued. The sultans did not accept Stephen's excuses and sent a new emissary – a certain Sinan Bey – with an ultimatum. From the Porte's perspective, those who refused to obey a sultan's order were traitors. Therefore, the Voivode had to choose between attacking the Szeklers and being removed from the sultan's favour. This time the Moldavian prince's reply was more elaborated; along with the already invoked Tatar menace, he expressed the fear that any attack against Transylvania would be followed by a Polish invasion of Moldavia. In this respect, Stephen mentions that the King of Poland and the King of Hungary were relatives and that Moldavia is unable to resist such foes. Along with these arguments, the prince and his boyars tried to convince with many gifts the Ottoman emissary to support their cause. After an initial refusal, Sinan Bey (who seemed to be of Moldavian origin) asked 100,000 *akçe* for his support; eventually, he received 60,000 *akçe*, 500 rams, gilded caftans, horses and furs.

³² The text of Luca Cârje diplomatic mission in Poland is published by Mihai Costăchescu (ed.), *Documente moldovenești*, doc. 112, p. 541.

³³ For an episode of Süleyman's anger in 1522 during the siege of Rhodes see Nevin Zeynep Yelçe, "Royal Wrath: Curbing the Anger of the Sultan", *Discourses of Anger in Early Modern Period*, eds. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Anita Traninger, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), p. 449.

This final payment put an end to the issue of the Moldavian participation in the Ottoman campaign of 1521. Obviously one should pay attention that all the aforementioned details are a part of a long discourse delivered in front of the Polish court by Luca Cârje. To be sure, rhetoric played an important part as the Moldavian emissary tried to convince the Polish King to protect Moldavia. The mention of the great dispenses made in 1521 for the sake of all Christendom underlined, on one hand, the loyalty of the Moldavian prince and elite towards the Christian kingdoms but, on the other hand, emphasised the vulnerability of Moldavia in front of the Ottoman Empire.

For Luca Cârje and his master, in the previous year, Moldavia had taken a big risk for the sake of an ideal cause with huge expenses and little gain. There was a certain respite for the moment but Sultan Süleyman seemed determined to continue his conquests against the Christian realms the document mentions in this respect the beginning of the siege of Rhodos.

A comparison between the policy of Wallachia and Moldavia in the age of the Ottoman conquest of Belgrade emphasises many similarities. Both principalities were vassals of the Porte and, theoretically, had the duty to join the Ottoman forces during the campaign. However, both principalities pursued in 1521 an ambivalent policy aimed to convince the sultan of their loyalty, but also to preserve the benevolence of the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland. Although a *longue durée* analysis shows that, usually, the Wallachian and Moldavian princes fulfilled their military duties on an Ottoman war, the expedition against Belgrade proved to be an exception.

This extraordinary situation was possible due to a wide range of diplomatic weapons used by the two Voivodes. There was a discursive strategy aimed to prove that the principalities were vulnerable to a potential attack (Wallachia from the Szekler region, Moldavia from the Tatars or even Poles) in the case that the princes would have joined the Ottoman camp. To endorse their point of view, both princes used the mediation of an Ottoman dignitary who had old relationships with their principalities. In the Wallachian case, the role was played by the Bey of Nicopolis, Mehmed Mihaloğlu who was an important political actor all along Neagoe Basarab's reign. In the case of Moldavia, it was Sinan Bey, a Moldavian by origin, who, in the end and after receiving lavish gifts, convinces the sultan that Moldavia was unable to accomplish the received task. Each

realm seems also to have been confronted with a specific context that made it difficult to carry out the received order. The lord of Wallachia was ill, and his successor was a child incapable of leading an army. During 1521, there was also an earthquake that probably enforced among the contemporaries the idea that the forthcoming Ottoman expedition was a divine punishment for the Christians' sins. All in all, the Wallachian attitude in 1521 seemed very cautious and there is no sign that Neagoe Basarab refused to comply with the Ottoman request. He only asked for a delay in gathering his troops and also invoked the necessity of Moldavian involvement in the upcoming invasion of Transylvania.

Moldavia took in the same year a much risky stance probably because in respect with its Wallachian neighbour enjoyed a certain pre-eminence at the Sublime Porte inherited from the time of Stephen the Great. The use of the figure of Stephen the Great by his nephew, Stephen the Younger points in the same direction. However, invoking tradition and Moldavia's loyalty to the Porte was not sufficient to explain an act of disobedience. Neither was the argument of the imminent Tatar invasion. In the end, the prince had to spend a considerable amount of money to appease the sultan's anger and to obtain his pardon. It seems, however, that he continued his policy as – probably in 1522 – he refused to allow the Bey of Silistra to pass through Moldavia against Poland.³⁴ Once again, his decision did not engender serious consequences.

The events analysed in the previous ages are certainly a case study and will be hasty to generalize the conclusions for a longer period. One may ask if the lenient attitude of the Porte in 1521 was not because Wallachia and Moldavia were given a marginal role in the war against Hungary. The scheduled invasion of Transylvania in which Neagoe Basarab and Stephen the Younger should have taken part was a simple diversion aimed to keep the Transylvanian troops in the region. Also despite the figures provided by the sources, the military might of Wallachia and Moldavia was unable to alter significantly the balance of forces between the Ottoman Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom.

³⁴ Mihai Costăchescu (ed.), *Documente moldovenești*, doc. 112, p. 543.

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THE BATTLE FOR THE THRONE: WALLACHIAN PRETENDERS AND OTTOMAN TROOPS (EARLY 15th C. – EARLY 17th C.)

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Abstract

Of More than fifty lords ruled Wallachia from 1418 to 1632, only four directly inherited the throne. Usually, a bid for the throne was decades long and it took extremely convoluted routes, as a successful pretender needed to gather a wide-ranging coalition of supporters and allies. The competition for the throne often led to open military confrontations and the armies involved in such battles were usually mixed. Throughout this period, the slow integration of the realm into the Ottoman Empire brought significant changes into the game of Wallachian politics and, more often than not, the Ottoman troops were actively participating to these battles. The aim of this article, which has a threefold structure, is to investigate the military confrontations for the throne of Wallachia. The first part will sketch a few methodological caveats, by mapping the different distortions of the primary sources, both intentional and unintentional. The second part proposes a broad overview, delineating the main phases in the history of the military confrontations for the throne of Wallachia from 1418 to 1632. Finally, the third and last section of the study attempts to theorize the main rules of engagement, trying to define the circumstances, conditions and manners in which a battle for the throne of Wallachia took (or did not take) place, with a special focus on the involvement of the Ottoman contingents.

Keywords: 15th Century, 16th Century, Battles, Ottoman Empire, Pretenders, Throne, Wallachia.

Introduction

At the monastery of Sadova, in south-western Wallachia, there is a strange painted inscription commemorating a battle between Matthew Basarab and the Ottomans. According to the inscription, Matthew Basarab,

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lord of Wallachia in between 1632 and 1654, fortified the monastery as a sign of gratitude for granting him refuge in a watershed moment: “I fought against the Turks twice at the Shepherd’s Ford [today Bechet, on the Danube] and, while being overwhelmed by them, I had found refuge in this holy place.”¹ The inscription puzzled Romanian scholars, as no other source mentions any hostilities in Western Wallachia in the context of Matthew’s ascension to the throne.² Several sources account Matthew Basarab’s two battles for the throne, the first one lost in 1631 against the ruling lord of Wallachia, and the second one won, a year later, in 1632, against a rival pretender.³ Both battles took place nearby Bucharest, at a considerable distance from Sadova. Most importantly, although in the decisive 1632 battle he fought against a Moldavian-Ottoman army sent to enthrone a sultan-appointed pretender, Matthew’s own claims to the throne were endorsed by an Ottoman patron, the influential Abaza Mehmed Pasha.⁴ Therefore, one can only conclude that the story accounted by the Sadova inscription of Matthew’s heroic fights against the Ottomans that opened his path to the throne is either a gross exaggeration, or a complete fabrication.

This example illustrates the main methodological difficulties in reconstructing the political and military confrontations for the Wallachian throne. Nothing bears more on a ruler’s legitimacy, than the way he obtained the throne. The sources produced in the midst of the conflict are profoundly biased, as they are usually partisan, championing one’s cause and supporting one’s claims. The sources written after the end of the conflict are equally tempered with, as they are prone to praise the winners and to smear the memory of the vanquished. In consequence, when it comes to the military disputes for the Wallachian throne, the sources project a highly distorted image, accounting not what really happened, but

¹ For an edition of this inscription, accompanied by a discussion of its content, see Dumitru Bălașa, “Minăstirea Sadova”, *Mitropolia Olteniei*, Vol. 23, No. 11-12 (1971), p. 854.

² As the inscription was repainted in the mid-nineteenth century, some scholars doubted its authenticity, see Nicolae Stoicescu, *Bibliografia localităților și monumentelor feudale din România. I. Țara Românească*, (Craiova: Mitropolia Olteniei, 1970), p. 611, footnote 9.

³ See Nicolae Stoicescu, “Lupta lui Matei din Brîncoveni pentru ocuparea tronului Țării Românești”, *Revista de Istorie*, Vol. 35, No. 9 (1982), pp. 985-1002.

⁴ For Abaza Mehmed’s support of Matthew Basarab, see Michał Wasiucionek, *The Ottomans and Eastern Europe. Borders and Political Patronage in the Early Modern World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 74-78.

either what one would hope to have happened or what one considers it should have happened. In consequence, in order to catch a glimpse of the historical truth, the historian has to remove the successive layers of self-interested wishful thinking and ideologically-revised historical memory. Accordingly, my article has a threefold structure. The first part will sketch a few methodological caveats, by mapping the different distortions of the primary sources, both intentional and unintentional. In the second part, I will propose a broad overview, delineating the main phases in the history of the military confrontations for the throne of Wallachia from 1418 to 1632.⁵ Finally, in the third and last section of the article, with the risk of oversimplifying, I will attempt to theorize the main rules of engagement, trying to define the circumstances, conditions and manners in which a battle for the throne of Wallachia took (or did not take) place, with a special focus on the involvement of the Ottoman contingents.⁶

1. Methodological Caveats

When discussing the military disputes for the throne, scholars usually turn to the Wallachian chronicles, as they are the only type of source that provides an overall and coherent image of these fights. Nonetheless, one needs to remember that, with the notable exception of Matthew of Myra's Greek history from around 1620 that narrates contemporary events,⁷ all other chronicles are extremely late. The oldest known version of a Wallachian chronicle is an Arabic translation from the 1660s,⁸ while no extant Wallachian manuscript is from earlier than the

⁵ The chronological span of this article is derived from the limits I have set for my in-progress book on the Wallachian pretenders.

⁶ The topic of the Ottoman-Wallachian military cooperation was, for a long time, something of a taboo in the Romanian scholarship. For the breaking of this scholarly taboo, see Ovidiu Cristea, "The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns", in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 253-274.

⁷ See Matthew of Myra, *Mathaiou istoria tis Ungro-Vlachias*, in *Tesauru de monumente istorice pentru România*, Vol. 1, ed. Alexandru Papiu Ilarian (București: Tipografia Stefanu Rassidescu, 1862), pp. 327–384. For an analysis of Matthew of Myra's history, see Alfred Vincent, "Byzantium regained? The History, Advice and Lament by Matthew of Myra", *Thesaurismata / Ἐπιστομματα*, Vol. 28 (1998), pp. 275-347.

⁸ Virgil Căndea, "Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292-1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim", *Studii. Revista de Istorie*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (1970), pp. 673-692.

1680s.⁹ Wallachia, unlike Moldavia, did not have a medieval chronic tradition.¹⁰ The late seventeenth century Wallachian chroniclers were influential in shaping the memory of the disputes for the throne, but they accounted events that happened decades and even centuries earlier, according to their own, contemporary, political agenda.

A second category of sources, the letters, are contemporary with the events, without however being more trustworthy. Up to 1530, the only extant letters sent by the different Wallachian political actors, such as ruling lords, pretenders, nobles, burghers or high clerics, are those preserved in the Transylvanian Saxons cities' archives of Kronstadt and Hermannstadt (today Braşov and Sibiu in Romania).¹¹ From the 1530s to the 1630s, there is a significantly wider variety of recipients of the Wallachian letters, such as Ottoman dignitaries, Habsburg emperors, Transylvanian potentates or Western European rulers.¹² Unavoidably, all these letters promote a self-interested account of events. Such an example is the letter sent by the pretender Mircea to his mother, who took refuge amongst the Transylvanian Saxons, from around 1510.¹³ Asking her mother to finance a military expedition to Wallachia, Mircea claimed that he received news that all Wallachian nobles are waiting for him and that he would need no more than one hundred men to conquer the throne. The

⁹ The oldest extant version is *Istoria Țării Românești (1290-1690). Letopiseșul Cantacuzinesc*, ed. C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu, (București, Editura Academiei, 1960). For the dating of the oldest extant manuscript, see Alexandru Mareș, *Sciere și cultură românească veche*, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2005).

¹⁰ There is a long going debate in the Romanian scholarship on the beginnings of history writing in Wallachia. The soundest hypothesis was proposed by Ștefan Andreescu, who dated the earliest Wallachian chronicle in the 1570s, during Alexandru II Mircea's reign, see *Istoria românilor: cronicari, misionari, ctitori*, (Cluj: Editura Limes, 2007).

¹¹ See mostly Ioan Bogdan, ed. *Documentele privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Braşovul și cu Țara Ungurească în secolele XV și XVI*, (București: Carol Göbl, 1905) and *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, ed. Franz Zimmermann et al., (Braşov/București/ Köln, 1892-1991).

¹² Most of these letters had been edited in the following multivolume collections: Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki et al., eds., *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki*, (București: Ed. Socec, 1880-1915); Andrei Veress, ed., *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești. Acte și scrisori*, (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1929-1939) and Mustafa Mehmed, ed., *Documente turcești privind istoria României*, Vol. 1 (1455-1774), (București, Editura Academiei, 1976).

¹³ Grigore G. Tocilescu, ed., *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346-1603*, (București: Librăria Cartea Românească, 1931), no. 229, pp. 220-221.

Wallachian support on which Mircea was counting proved to be largely illusory, as the failure of his expedition was to reveal.¹⁴ Therefore, Mircea's claims were either illusory self-delusions or deceitful lies. The pretender had to present his chances to the throne in the best possible light, as he was desperately trying to convince his mother to finance his military adventure.

Bits and pieces of information with regard to the military confrontations for the Wallachian throne are also to be found in other types of Wallachian sources, such as the charters issued by the princely chancery, a handful of tomb inscriptions, one manuscript annotation, several memorial crosses erected on battlefields or some heroic songs. The charters refer to the disputes for the throne only incidentally, when a nobiliary estate that had been previously confiscated for felony changed hands. Such are Radu Paisie's two charters from around 1540 that recount the conflict with his rival, Laiotă Basarab.¹⁵

As for the funeral inscriptions, there are to be found either on princely tombs, such as Vlad the Young's, Radu from Afumați's or Moses's, or on nobles' ones, such as Albu Golescu's or Stroe Buzescu's.¹⁶ The narrative of these inscriptions might sometimes significantly differ from the one provided by other sources. A recent co-authored article provided such a comparative analysis for the same events, narrated rather differently in Stroe Buzescu's tombstone inscription and in a charter issued by Radu Șerban's chancery.¹⁷ The manuscript annotations are extremely rare, but highly valuable, such as the Ioannina Greek text, written by a monk from Bucharest, edited by Andronikos Falangas, that provides us with a grass-root perspective on the 1610-1611 conflicts between Gabriel

¹⁴ See appendix 3, footnote 81.

¹⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, Vol. 4 (1536-1550), ed. Damaschin Mioc, (București: Editura Academiei, 1981), no. 69, pp. 91-92 and no. 133, pp. 166-167.

¹⁶ N. Iorga, ed., *Inscripții din bisericile României*, (București: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură Minerva, 1905-1908), Vol. 1, p. 101, p. 145, p. 148-149, p. 195 and Constantin Bălan, ed., *Inscripții medievale și din epoca modernă a României. Județul istoric Vâlcea (sec. XIV-1848)*, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2005), pp. 909-910.

¹⁷ Ovidiu Cristea, Ramona Neacșa, "Elitele, memoria și istoria. Un episod din timpul domniei lui Radu Șerban", *Mari familii boierești din Moldova în veacurile XVII-XIX. Referințe identitare și manifestări de putere*, ed. Mihai-Bogdan Atanasiu, Mihai Mirza, (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2020), pp. 37-60.

Bathory, Radu Șerban and Radu Mihnea.¹⁸ As for the memorial crosses erected on battlefields, there is only one inscription preserved, celebrating Leon Tomșa's 1631 victory over Matthew Basarab,¹⁹ while a few other examples are mentioned by late 16th and 17th century travellers, such as Maciej Strykowski, Martin Gruneweg or Peter Bogdan Baksic.²⁰ The heroic songs had all been lost, but their circulation and even partial content can be reconstructed with the use of later chronicles, charters and cartularies.²¹ To sum up, the evidence provided by the Wallachian sources is highly fragmented and chronologically unbalanced. The fights for the Wallachian throne are scarcely documented for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, while the sources become more abundant only for the first decades of the seventeenth century.

Fortunately, the non-Wallachian sources add considerably to our historical knowledge. The Hungarian, Transylvanian-Saxon, Ottoman, Moldavian and Byzantine chronicles provide a unique insight into several pretenders' military exploits and their attempts to overcome the ruling lords of Wallachia.²² To give just an example, the Moldavian chronicles

¹⁸ See Andronikos Falangas, "Conflictele dintre Gabriel Báthory, Radu Șerban și Radu Mihnea pentru Țara Românească în lumina unui izvor grecesc necunoscut", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 20 (2002), pp. 54-64.

¹⁹ The cross, erected in 1632, celebrated the victory against the "exiles", without naming Matthew, see *Inscripții medievale ale României. Orașul București*, ed. Alexandru Elian, (București: Editura Academiei, 1965), p. 406; see also Paul Cernovodeanu, "Complexul istoric de la Slobozia Crucea lui Leon vodă", *Glasul Bisericii*, Vol. 2, No. 7-8 (1970), pp. 773-776.

²⁰ See Ștefan Andreescu, *Medievale*, (Brăila: Istros, 2016), pp. 277-283.

²¹ See Marian Coman, "Memoria războiului în documentele de cancelarie ale Țării Românești. Hrisoavele Goleștilor", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 36 (2018), pp. 317-352.

²² For the Moldavian chronicles see I. Bogdan, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, ed. P.P. Panaitescu, (București: Editura Academiei, 1959). For the Wallachian political disputes mentioned in Byzantine chronicles see Al. Elian, N. Ș. Tanașoca, eds., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae. III. Scriptores Byzantini saec. XI-XIV*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1975) și H. Mihăescu, R. Lăzărescu, N. Ș. Tanașoca, T. Teoteoi, eds., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae. IV. Scriptores et Acta Imperii Byzantini saec. XI-XV*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1983). A selection of fragments from the Ottoman chronicles pertaining to the history of the Wallachia was published in the three-volume series edited by M. Guboglu and M. Mehmet, eds., *Cronici turcești privind țările române*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1966-1980). For the history of Wallachia documented by the Transylvanian-Saxon chronicles, see A. Armbruster, *Dacoromano-Saxonica*:

give unrivalled details on the military conflicts between the Wallachian lords and the Moldavian-backed pretenders. The so called Putna chronicle provides a step-by-step account of Basarab the Old's 1473 expedition against Radu the Fair, backed by the Moldavian lord, and about Radu the Fair's subsequent comeback supported by the Ottomans, with vivid details about the itinerary, the duration of fights and the number of troops.²³

The Ottoman, Hungarian, Moldavian, Transylvanian and Habsburg documents, either letters or charters, are equally useful. For instance, a 1427 diploma issued by Sigismund of Luxemburg refers to the military prowess of a Hungarian nobleman during the fights for the Wallachian throne between Dan and Radu, nicknamed Radu the Empty-Headed by his rival.²⁴ As the realm of Wallachia gradually integrated within the Ottoman Empire, the Wallachian political in-fights were increasingly referred to in the correspondence of the Istanbul-based diplomats, first and foremost by the Venetian bails, but later on, by the Habsburg, French, English and Dutch ambassadors.²⁵ For instance, in 1512, the bail Andrea Foscolo accounts how the conflict between Vlad the Young and Neagoe Basarab was used by an Ottoman dignitary as an evasive strategy in the negotiations with the Venetians.²⁶

Obviously, these sources also need to be carefully assessed, even when, apparently, they corroborate each other. At the end of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth, a Moldavian chronicle and a Venetian bail estimated the size of the Ottoman armies interfering in the

cronicari români despre sași: românii în cronică săsească, (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980).

²³ See I. Bogdan, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, ed. P.P. Panaitescu, p. 50.

²⁴ Ștefan Pascu et al., eds., *Documenta Romaniae Historica. D. Relații între Țările Române*, Vol. 1 (1222-1456), (București: Editura Academiei, 1977), no. 157, pp. 251-252.

²⁵ Most of these letters had been edited in the series mentioned above: Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki et al., eds., *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki*, (footnote 11). For the English ambassadors see also E.D. Tappe, ed., *Documents Concerning Rumanian History (1427-1601)*, (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1964).

²⁶ "Et da poi varii discorsi, rasonamenti et proposte per che alhora dicto illustrissimo Signor haveva mandato exercito de 12 in 15 mila persone oltra el Danubio per reprimer li andamenti del vayvoda vlaccho, li magnifici bassà commençiorono ad excusarse cum dir che el Signor non voleva intrar in questa impresa se prima el non vedeva quello dovesse seguir del exercito suo mandato in Vlachia, ma rissolvendose dicta impresa in bon tenivano certo che etiam la cosa nostra prenderia bon fin, et cum tal excusation scorseno molti et molti zorni", in Maria Pia Pedani-Fabris, ed., *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato, Vol. XIV, Constantinopoli. Relazioni inedite (1512-1789)*, (Padova: Ausilio, 1996), p. 15.

Wallachian disputes for the throne, at around 15,000 men. However, at a closer look, such a high number proves to be a gross exaggeration. The Moldavian chronicler wanted to emphasize that only a huge, overwhelming, Ottoman force was able to undo the initial Moldavian success. As for the Venetian bail, his scepticism towards the account of a substantial deployment of Ottoman forces in Wallachia was rather obvious. The size of the armies involved in the seemingly never-ending fights for the throne is difficult to estimate, given the unreliability of the sources, but they seem closer to a few thousand, or even to several hundreds.²⁷ A recently published document attests that in mid-sixteenth century a pretender, who even managed to take the throne for a brief period, was looking to hire 500 infantry soldiers and 300 arquebusiers.²⁸

Putting together all these bits of information is like assembling a single puzzle with just a few surviving pieces that, furthermore, were initially part of completely different sets. The overall image has numerous holes in it and, the closer one looks, the more visible the gaps and the incongruities become. The methodological caveats can be condensed in a few rules of thumb. The first is that a successful pretender is always better documented than an unsuccessful one. From 1418 to 1632, there are approximately 70 military challenges²⁹ to the throne of Wallachia, which roughly equals one every three years. Nonetheless, despite this high frequency, this is definitely a low estimate, as there are probably a

²⁷ The sources mostly exaggerate the size of the armies, either to justify the defeat or to amplify the victory.

²⁸ Petronel Zahariuc, “Despre Radu vodă Ilie (Haidăul) după un document slavo-român din arhivele de la Viena”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 40 (2022), pp. 448-451.

²⁹ For their list, see the appendixes of this study. I included under the analytical category of “military challenge” any attempt of a pretender to dethrone the ruling lord, either by coming into Wallachia with his men, or by assembling his supporters within the realm. Thus, pretenders who went to Istanbul in an attempt to convince the sultans to appoint them rulers of Wallachia do not fall under this category. The distinction between a military and a political challenge to the throne was not always clear-cut. For instance, a Wallachian charter refers to the pretender Ivan the Badger that attempted to usurp Radu Paisie’s throne, see Damaschin Mioc, ed., *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, Vol. IV, Nos. 194 and 238, p. 235-236 and 285-286 and N. Iorga, “Încă un pretendent muntean, Ivan Viezure,” *Revista Istorică*, Vol. 17, No.7-9 (1931), p. 176. Nonetheless, from this single reference one cannot decide if Ivan actually staged a military uprising. Pretenders could try to usurp the throne not only by a military uprising, but also by political scheming, see for instance Daniel Mirea, “Drăghici postelnic, ‘domn la Țarigrad’”, *Analele Universității Al. I. Cuza. Istorie*, Vol. 66, 2020, pp. 81-107.

significant number of undocumented contests for the throne.³⁰ The second is that an externally-backed pretender is far more likely to be documented than a Wallachian-based one, at least for the earlier period. Accordingly, the scholarly view of Wallachia as a battleground between the neighbouring potentates obscures the agency of the Wallachian elites. And, finally, the third rule of thumb is that most of the sources were interested in the outcome of a conflict for the throne and not in the actual sequence of events. When provided, details were usually rhetorically charged. Thus, to give just an example, after winning a battle, a victorious lord was inclined to overlook any outside help and to interpret his success as a sign of God's grace, due exclusively to his own merits.

2. The Main Phases

These methodological preliminaries were necessary before turning to the main part of my study, in which I try to delineate the main phases in the history of the military confrontations for the throne of Wallachia and to define the rules of engagement. The first phase was from the early 1420s to the early 1480s. As the table included in the first appendix reveals, throughout this period the throne was highly disputed, with a first peak in the 1420s and a second, higher one, in the 1470s. Almost all challengers were externally-backed and their rate of success is impressive: of 23 documented attempts, 21 were successful. There are only three known battles, but this is undoubtedly a lacuna in the documentation. As I already mentioned, most of the sources for this earlier period are originated from outside Wallachia and they are more interested in the final outcome than in the actual sequence of events. Unsurprisingly, all three battlefields known to us are mentioned by Moldavian sources, as the Wallachian pretenders had been supported in their attempts by Moldavian contingents. A Wallachian lord from this period knew that his reign was bound to be brief and interrupted, an idea explicitly conveyed by Vlad the Impaler in a Latin letter sent to Kronstadt Saxons immediately after his ascension, in which he was asking for future shelter, "any time and every time" when he will be forced to leave the realm.³¹

³⁰ See for instance the pretenders of whom we know nothing about, except their name (to which sometimes was added a pejorative nickname), such as Dragoslav the Swineherd (1522) or Dragodan (1531). For the sources mentioning these two pretenders, see the appendixes.

³¹ "quandocunque et quocienscunque in processu temporum, pre timore Turcorum aut expulsion nostrorum inimicorum, ad partes Hungarie et ipsorum in medio devenire

The second phase (*Appendix 2*) is arguably the most unusual one in the history of medieval Wallachia, as from 1482, when Basarab the Young was killed at Glogova,³² to 1510, when the Ottoman troops installed Vlad the Young,³³ there is only one documented challenge to the throne of Wallachia. However, there are some indirect clues hinting at a far more tumultuous political period. The two rulers, father and son (Vlad the Monk and Radu the Great), that held the throne for 25 years, confiscated an impressive amount of noble estates for a felony.³⁴ The sixteenth-century Wallachian charters are sometimes referring to these felons, even labelling one of them, Vlad the Dvornik, as a pretender.³⁵ Therefore, this peaceful quarter of century might be an illusion due to the lack of external sources, as foreign observers were far less interested in the Wallachian infights if they had no direct stake and if they were not actively involved. Nonetheless, it seems certain that, throughout this period, the Wallachian lords were far more capable of holding on to their throne, as long as their rival contenders lacked significant external support.

The third phase is equally short, from the 1510s to the early 1530s, and I would call it a transitional period (*Appendix 3*). During these two decades, the odds were split rather evenly, with the ruling lord managing

contingerit, ipsi nos et nostros suscipiant, pie tractant, nutriant et inimicis nostris inimici sint” in *Documenta Romaniae Historica. D. Relații între Țările Române*, Vol. 1 (1222-1456), eds. Ștefan Pascu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1977), no. 338, p. 456-458.

³² See the letter sent by Vlad the Monk to the Saxon Kronstadt, in Ioan Bogdan, ed., *Documentele privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și cu Țara Ungurească în secolele XV și XVI*, București, Carol Göbl, 1905, no. 150, p. 182-183.

³³ In the letter sent to the Saxon city of Hermannstadt, Vlad the Young omitted to mention the Ottoman support, simply stating that he came to Wallachia to seat on the throne of his father and of brother and that his rival fled at his arrival, see Silviu Dragomir, “Documente nouă privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Sibiu,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională din Cluj*, Vol. 4 (1926-1927), p. 30-31. However, the other sources, including a Venetian diplomatic report, undoubtedly assert that Vlad was enthroned in the aftermath of an Ottoman military intervention in Wallachia, see Alexandru Lăpedatu, “Mihnea cel Rău și ungurii (1508-1510),” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională din Cluj*, Vol. 1 (1921-1922), p. 64.

³⁴ See Ion Donat, *Domeniul domnesc în Țara Românească (sec. XIV-XVI)*, ed. Gheorghe Lazăr, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996), p. 30-38

³⁵ See *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, Vol. 2 (1500-1525), eds. Ștefan Ștefănescu and Olimpia Diaconescu, (București: Editura Academiei, 1972), no. 9, p. 22-25. See also the insightful comments made by Ramona Neacșa in the introduction to the collective volume *Cercul puterii. Oameni, reșele, strategii (sec. XV-XVII)*, ed. Ramona Neacșa, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2021), p. 12-14.

to hold on to the throne in one of two challenges. Evidently, the fights for the Wallachian throne were closely entangled with the shifting balance of power in the region, especially after the fall of the Hungarian kingdom. Most importantly, the last successful challenge to the throne that came from a Transylvanian-backed pretender happened in 1524.³⁶ A few years later, in 1530, Moses's failure to recover the throne despite being accompanied by a significant number of Transylvanian troops, became a turning point in the history of medieval Wallachia.³⁷ For more than a century, most of the pretenders had roamed in the vicinity of Wallachia, spending most of their time in Moldavia and in southern Transylvania, nearby the Saxon cities of Kronstadt and Hermannstadt. From this moment onwards, the centre-point of the Wallachian pretenders' schemes decisively moved within the Ottoman Empire, to Istanbul. Moldavian-and Transylvanian-backed pretenders continued to challenge the throne, but they were fewer in number and, for more than half a century, they were utterly unsuccessful. The 1529 challenge was equally important, as no rival pretender stepped forward in the aftermath of a successful rebellion against the ruling lord.³⁸ Most likely, the potential contenders avoided throwing their name in the hat too early, as a self-proclaimed lord surely would have antagonized the Ottoman sultan.

This transitional period ended in the 1530s and for the next six decades, a new pattern emerged (*Appendix 4*). The challenges to the throne

³⁶ Radu from Afumați crossed the Carpathian Mountains in the winter of 1523-1524 with a Transylvanian-Wallachian army and successfully defeated his rivals. In a letter sent to Hermannstadt in January 1524, Radu was informing the Saxons that, although his main rival did not have yet "many Turks" on his side, he was bragging that the sancak-beys of Vidin and Nicopolis would join him soon, see Grigore G. Tocilescu, ed., *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346-1603*, no. 284, pp. 281-282.

³⁷ For Moses's attempt to regain the throne, see the two, rather out-dated, scholarly articles by I. Ursu, "Din influențele politice europene asupra istoriei noastre (Moise Vodă)", *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secției Istorice*, seria II, Vol. 36 (1913-1914), pp. 517-528 and Em. Gr. Nicolaescu, "Moise Vodă", *Arhivele Olteniei*, Vol. 18 (1939), pp. 406-429.

³⁸ For the murky events and the contradictory reports that followed the murdering of Radu from Afumați by a group of Wallachian nobles in January 1529 see Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova*, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001), p. 176-177. Although different sources mention the name of a pretender (a certain Basarab), no one actually stepped forward to claim the throne. Instead, the Wallachian nobles and pretenders started negotiating with the Ottomans for a successor.

became rarer, as the contenders' chances of success proved to be significantly lower. Even if a pretender did win the first battle against the ruling lord, as it happened in 1536, 1539, 1544, 1552, 1559 or 1574,³⁹ the sultan-appointed ruler usually staged a comeback with the support of the Ottoman troops. This pattern, first documented in the 1470s⁴⁰, generalized around the mid-sixteenth century: after an initial defeat, the ruling lord temporarily retreated to the Ottoman fortresses of Giurgiu and Turnu and the challenger enjoyed a short-lived victory. Then, in a few months' time, the former lord was returning to chase the pretender and to regain his throne with the help of the Ottoman troops. The slow and gradual integration of Wallachia within the Ottoman Empire endorsed the ruler's infrastructural power,⁴¹ without, however, eliminating completely the military challenges to the throne.

The Ottoman grip on Wallachia loosened up during the fifteen-years' war between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, especially due to the Poland, Moldavian, and Transylvanian interferences in the Wallachian politics (*Appendix 5*). The former, rather regular, pattern shattered and the political scene became highly unstable. Most importantly, the end of the war did not restore the previous order, as the hectic events from 1609-1611, 1618 and 1632 clearly show.⁴² As Ștefan Andreescu convincingly argued, throughout these decades the political exploits of the three Ottoman tributary principalities, of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, became deeply entangled.⁴³ Two members of a Moldavian princely family, the Movilești, took the throne of Wallachia. Mirroring the same evolution, a Wallachian-Ottoman family staged an impressive transfer of power in 1623, when Radu Mihnea exchanged the throne of Wallachia for that of

³⁹ See the bibliographical references in the footnotes accompanying *Appendix 4*.

⁴⁰ In the autumn of 1474 Radu the Fair temporarily retreated to Giurgiu, fleeing from the Moldavia-Wallachian army led by his rival Laiotă Basarab, see Constantin A. Stoide, "Legăturile dintre Moldova și Țara Românească în a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea (Contribuții)," *Studii și Cercetări Științifice. Istorie*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (1956), p. 59-73.

⁴¹ For an interpretation of late medieval Wallachia through the lenses of Michael Mann's conceptual distinction between infrastructural and despot power, see Marian Coman, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV-XVI)*, (Iași: Polirom, 2013).

⁴² See the bibliographical references in the footnotes accompanying *Appendix 5*.

⁴³ Ștefan Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae. Vol. 2. Realitățile politice dintre "Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1601-1659*, (București: Editura Albatraos, 1989), pp. 7-84

Moldavia, only to leave his minor son to rule over his former realm.⁴⁴ In 1632, the upper chronological limit of my analysis, Matthew Basarab, benefiting from the support of Abaza Mehmed Pasha, managed to defeat the sultan-appointed lord and to take the throne of Wallachia.⁴⁵ Matthew's unusually long reign of twenty-two years marked a new stage in the history of Wallachia.⁴⁶

3. The Rules of Engagement

Such a long-durée analysis, despite its obvious shortcomings, guides us to some general conclusions. The first one is that the throne of Wallachia was highly disputed throughout this period because challengers had a fair chance of success. The throne was, quite literally, up for grabs and a contender that benefited from some external support was usually able to defeat the ruling lord. Once acquired however, the throne was far more difficult to hold on to, which reveals how weak the infrastructural power of the Wallachian lordship actually was.⁴⁷

The gradual and incomplete integration of Wallachia within the Ottoman Empire had a beneficial impact on the political stability of the realm. Nonetheless, the military support available to the sultan-appointed rulers of Wallachia was undermined by ideological constraints. From a military point of view, the ruling lords should have waited for the Ottoman troops to arrive before engaging in an open confrontation against any contender. However, time and time again, they hurried to confront their rivals in battle, only to be defeated. This repetitive pattern cannot be explained by poor judgement, but rather by some structural reasons. Firstly, the Sultan was probably more inclined to send help once a political and military threat actually proved to be real. But equally important, by delaying or refusing the combat, a ruling lord was inflicting upon himself

⁴⁴ The sole scholarly monograph on Radu Mihnea had been written by Valentin Constantinov, *Țara Românească și Țara Moldovei în timpul domniilor lui Radu Mihnea*, (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2007).

⁴⁵ See above, footnotes 3 and 4.

⁴⁶ Romanian scholars usually prefer to consider Michael the Brave's reign (1593-1601) as a historical turning point. However, there are far more reasons to view Matthew Basarab's reign (1632-1654) as a period of pivotal cultural and political transformations in the history of Wallachia.

⁴⁷ See Marian Coman, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV-XVI)*.

a vital symbolic loss. The ruling lord of Wallachia was not only appointed by the Sultan, but also chosen by God⁴⁸ and, as a result, he was compelled to confront any challenger in order to confirm his status. By hesitating to face a contender on the battlefield, a ruling lord risked to lose his nobles' support.

In the guise of a conclusion, I will end my study with four specific examples that illustrate how the ideological constraints dented the strategic considerations, leading to poor military, but politically-wise, decision-making. In 1474, the ruling lord of Wallachia, Radu the Fair, wrote to the Kronstadt Saxons an extraordinary letter, going to great length to justify his reluctance to confront his contender in open battle.⁴⁹ Rather childishly, he began by excusing himself blaming a temporary illness. But he continued by giving assurance that the momentary weakness had passed and that he was ready to mount his horse and go to war. He emphasised that he had never left his realm, which was rather a technical loophole: he was still north of the Danube, but in Ottoman Giurgiu. A ruling lord that fled his realm without a battle, as did Simion Movilă in 1602⁵⁰ or Alexander Iliăş in 1618⁵¹, was clearly contemptible. In order to convince his subjects to follow him, a lord appointed by the Sultan, but chosen by God, should not hesitate to entrust his life into God's hands. In 1536, the former monk Radu Paisie emphasised precisely this point: he accepted the challenge and defeated his rival in personal combat, although the treacherous Wallachian nobles did not accept God's will.⁵²

⁴⁸ For this political idea, see Radu G. Păun, “‘Élu de la matrice de ma mère’: Pouvoir et prédestination aux XVIe–XVIIe siècles,” in *The Biblical Models of Power and Law*, eds. Ivan Biliarsky and Radu G. Păun, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 225–270 and Marian Coman, “Înainte de tradiția bizantină. Încăunarea domnilor în Țara Românească medievală (secolele al XV-lea – al XVI-lea)”, in *Literatura de ceremonial în spațiul românesc. Definiții, probleme, metode*, ed. Emanuela Timotin, (București: Editura Academiei, 2018), p. 79–84.

⁴⁹ The letter was edited by Constantin A. Stoide in “Legăturile dintre Moldova și Țara Românească în a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea (Contribuții),” pp. 71–72.

⁵⁰ The inscription on Stroe Buzescu's tombstone pejoratively refers to Simion Movilă, who did not meet his opponent in battle, but instead he fled to Moldavia, see Constantin Bălan, ed., *Inscripții medievale și din epoca modernă a României. Județul istoric Vâlcea (sec. XIV–1848)*, pp. 909–910.

⁵¹ See *Istoria Țării Românești (1290–1690). Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, ed. C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu, pp. 93–93 and Radu Popescu, *Istoriile domnilor Țării Românești*, ed. C. Grecescu, (București: Editura Academiei, 1963), p. 87.

⁵² Radu Paisie sent a letter to his cousin, Nicolaus Olahus, describing the duel. Olahus included a short summary of the letter in one of his works, see *Ungaria. Attila*, ed. Antal

In 1611, when Gabriel Báthory challenged Radu Șerban to duel, he invoked the same reasoning: “instead of shedding the blood of our men, if you truly love your realm, then you should meet me in personal combat; if God gives you the victory, let Wallachia be yours, if He gives it to me, let it be by mine.”⁵³ These words served as a reminder that, throughout the medieval period, the battles for the Wallachian throne were viewed by their protagonists not only as military confrontations, but, first and foremost, as trials by combat that revealed God’s will.

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Gyöngyvér, (Iași: Institutul European, 1999), pp. 88-91. According to this account, the duel took place in front of the two armies, on the battlefield. Apparently, Radu managed to throw his rival off the horse, but before giving him the final blow; the treacherous Wallachian nobles interfered and sided with the pretender.

⁵³ See the Hungarian report, *Relatio rerum Transalpinarum*, from the 17th of February 1611, edited in Andrei Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești*, Vol. 8 (1607-1613), (București: Cartea Românească, 1935), no. 106, p. 139-143.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The military challenges to the Wallachian throne (1418-1481)⁵⁴

Year	Ruling lord	Challenger	Battle
1420 ⁵⁵	Mihail	Radu Empty-Headed (Ottoman-backed)	
1422 ⁵⁶	Radu Empty-Headed	Dan II (Hungarian-backed)	
1426 ⁵⁷	Dan	Radu Empty-Headed (Ottoman-backed)	
1427 ⁵⁸	Radu Empty-Headed	Dan III (Hungarian-backed)	
1431 ⁵⁹	Dan	Alexandru Aldea (Moldavian-backed)	
1436 ⁶⁰	Alexandru Aldea	Vlad the Devil (Hungarian-backed)	
1442 ⁶¹	Vlad the Devil	Basarab II (Hungarian-backed)	
1447 ⁶²	Vlad the Devil	Vladislav II (Hungarian-backed)	

⁵⁴ The name of the winner is bolded in the appendixes. For the analytical category of “military challenge”, see above, footnote 28.

⁵⁵ See Viorica Pervain, “Lupta antiotomană a Țărilor Române în anii 1419-1420”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca*, Vol. 19 (1976), pp. 55-79.

⁵⁶ See Viorica Pervain, “Lupta antiotomană la Dunărea de Jos în anii 1422-1427”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca*, Vol. 26 (1983-1984), pp. 85-118.

⁵⁷ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 88.

⁵⁸ The campaign that replaced Radu with Dan was led by Sigismund of Luxemburg, whose army included a Portuguese prince and a contingent of Teutonic knights. Aside of the several charters issued by Sigismund referring to this campaign, there is also a contemporary Teutonic report, which estimates the crusading army at 600 knights and 4.000 infantries, while the number of the Ottoman troops sent to uphold Radu would have been around 11.000 (however, in the end, this Ottoman army did not enter Wallachia), see Liviu Cîmpeanu, “Dan al II-lea, Sigismund de Luxemburg și cruciada târzie un document inedit din arhiva ordinului teutonic”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 30 (2012), pp. 55-76.

⁵⁹ See Andrei Pippidi, “Despre Dan voievod. Rectificări cronologice și genealogice”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 31 (2013), pp. 47-96.

⁶⁰ See Ilie Minea, “Vlad Dracul și vremea sa”, *Cercetări istorice*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1928), pp. 65-276.

⁶¹ See Constantin Stoide, “Basarab al II-lea (1442-1444)”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A. D. Xenopol. Iași*, Vol. 17 (1980), pp. 279-301.

⁶² See Francisc Pall, “Intervenția lui Iancu de Hundoara în Țara Românească și Moldova în anii 1447-1448”, *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* Vol. 16, No. 5, (1963), pp. 1049-1072.

1448 ⁶³	Vladislav II	Vlad the Impaler (Ottoman-backed)	
1456 ⁶⁴	Vladislav II	Vlad the Impaler (Hungarian-backed)	
1460 ⁶⁵	Vlad the Impaler	Dan (Hungarian-backed)	
1462 ⁶⁶	Vlad the Impaler	Radu the Fair (Ottoman-backed)	
1473 ⁶⁷	Radu the Fair	Basarab the Old (Moldavian-backed)	Pârâul Apei (Vodna)
1474 ⁶⁸	Basarab the Old	Radu the Fair (Ottoman-backed)	
1474 ⁶⁹	Radu the Fair	Basarab the Old (Moldavian-backed)	Cetatea Teleajenului
1474 ⁷⁰	Basarab the Old	Basarab the Young (Hungarian-backed)	
1474 ⁷¹	Basarab the Young	Radu the Fair (Ottoman-backed)	
1475 ⁷²	Radu the Fair	Basarab the Old (Moldavian-backed)	
1476 ⁷³	Basarab the Old	Vlad the Impaler (Hungarian-backed)	
1477 ⁷⁴	Vlad the Impaler	Basarab the Old (Ottoman-backed)	

⁶³ See Matei Cazacu, *Dracula*, trans. Stephen W. Reinert, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 66-69.

⁶⁴ See Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș (Dracula). Între legendă și adevăr istoric*, (București: Minerva, 1976), pp. 46-60.

⁶⁵ See Liviu Câmpeanu, “Nefericitul voievod Dan cel Tânăr. Intervențiile Ungariei în probleme dinastice ale Țării Românești”, *Acta Mvsei Napocensis*, Vol. 45-46 (2009), pp. 13-20.

⁶⁶ See Matei Cazacu, *Dracula*, pp. 156-160 and Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș*, pp. 105-123.

⁶⁷ See Ștefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, (Putna: fânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005), pp. 100-101.

⁶⁸ For the chaotic political changes of that year, see Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 109-115.

⁶⁹ See Ștefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 108.

⁷⁰ The Austrian chronicler Jakob Unrest was mentioning an army of 8.000 Turks, see Liviu Câmpeanu, “Basarab Laiotă, domn al Țării Românești: preliminarii la o monografie”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 32 (2014), pp. 145-172.

⁷¹ The Polish chronicler Martin Bielski refers to an Ottoman army of 120.000 sent to reinstate Radu on the throne and to defeat Stephen of Moldavia, see Ștefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 111.

⁷² See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 115.

⁷³ See Matei Cazacu, *Dracula*, pp. 176-179 and Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș*, pp. 123-145.

⁷⁴ See Matei Cazacu, *Dracula*, pp. 176-179 and Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș*, pp. 123-145.

1478 ⁷⁵	Basarab the Old	Basarab the Young (Moldavian-backed)	
1480 ⁷⁶	Basarab the Young	Mircea (Moldavian-backed)	
1481 ⁷⁷	Basarab the Young	Vlad the Monk (Moldavian-backed)	Râmnicu Sărat
1481 ⁷⁸	Vlad the Monk	Basarab the Young (Hungarian-backed)	

Appendix 2: The military challenges to the Wallachian throne (1482-1510)

Year	Ruling lord	Challenger	Battle
1482 ⁷⁹	Basarab the Young	Vlad the Monk (Hungarian-backed)	Glogova (?)
~ ⁸⁰	Vlad the Monk	Vlad the Dvornik	
1510 ⁸¹	Mircea III	Vlad the Young (Ottoman-backed)	Cotmeana (?)

Appendix 3: The military challenges to the Wallachian throne (1511-1530)

Year	Ruling lord	Challenger	Battle
1511 ⁸²	Vlad the Young	Mircea III	Gherghița
1512 ⁸³	Vlad the Young	Neagoe Basarab (Ottoman-backed)	

⁷⁵ See Ștefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 111.

⁷⁶ See Ovidiu Cristea, Marian Coman, “A Late Fifteenth Century Controversy on the Moldavian–Wallachian Frontier: An Incident Analysis”, in Martin Rady, Alexandru Simon, eds., *Government and Law in Medieval Moldavia, Transylvania and Wallachia*, (University College of London, 2013), pp. 101-119.

⁷⁷ See Ștefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 200-207.

⁷⁸ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 126-127.

⁷⁹ See the letter sent by Vlad the Monk to the Kronstadt Saxons, informing them that Basarab was killed at Glogova, by his supporters from the Mehedinți region, in Ioan Bogdan, ed. *Documentele privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și cu Țara Ungurească în secolele XV și XVI*, no. 150, p. 182-183.

⁸⁰ See above footnote 35.

⁸¹ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 138.

⁸² See *Istoria Țării Românești (1290-1690). Letopiseșul Cantacuzinesc*, ed. C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu, p. 19-20

⁸³ See Mustafa Ali Mehmet, “Două documente turcești despre Neagoe Basarab”, *Studii. Revista de istorie*, Vol. 21 (1968), pp. 921-930.

1512 ⁸⁴	Neogoe Basarab	Mircea III	
1521 ⁸⁵	Theodosie	Vlad (Dragomir) the Monk	
1522 ⁸⁶	Radu from Afumați	Dragoslav the Swineherd	
1523 ⁸⁷	Radu from Afumați	Vladislav III (Ottoman-backed)	
1523 ⁸⁸	Vladislav III	Radu Bădica	
1524 ⁸⁹	Vladislav III	Radu from Afumați (Hungarian-backed)	București
1525 ⁹⁰	Radu from Afumați	Vladislav III	Dridu (?)
1525 ⁹¹	Radu from Afumați	Anonymous rival (Moldavian-backed)	
1529 ⁹²	Radu from Afumați	Unnamed rival	
1530 ⁹³	Vlad the Drowned	Moses (Transylvanian-backed)	Viișoara
1531 ⁹⁴	Vlad the Drowned	Dragodan	

⁸⁴ See Mustafa Ali Mehmet, *Documente turcești privind istoria României, Vol. 1 (1455-1774)*, no. 8, p. 9.

⁸⁵ See Daniel Mirea, "Theodosie voievod, Dragomir Călugărul și un document îndoielnic din vremea lui Vlad cel Tânăr", *Analele Științifice ale Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași. Istorie*, Vol. 60 (2014), pp. 151-179.

⁸⁶ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 158-159.

⁸⁷ A Wallachian noble informed the Hermannstadt Saxons that Vladislav was coming to Wallachia accompanied by "a lot of Turks" Petre P. Panaitescu, ed., *Documente slavo-române din Sibiu (1470-1653)*, (București: Monitorul Oficial, 1938), no. 19, pp. 27-29.

⁸⁸ See Nicolae Iorga, "Pretendenți domnești din veacul al XVI-lea," *Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice (seria a II-a)*, Vol. 19 (1897), pp. 262-266.

⁸⁹ The battle of Bucharest against Vladislav III is mentioned on the inscription placed on Radu from Afumați's tombstone, see Constantin Bălan, ed., *Inscripții medievale și din epoca modernă a României. Județul istoric Argeș (sec. XIV-1848)*, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 224-229.

⁹⁰ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 175.

⁹¹ According to a letter sent by John Zápolya, the pretender entered Wallachia from Moldavia with an army of 2.000 men, see A. Veress, *Acta et epistolae relationum Transylvaniae Hungariaeque cum Moldavia et Valachia*, Vol. I, (Kolozsvár, 1914), no. 100, pp. 136-138.

⁹² See above footnote 38.

⁹³ See above footnote 37.

⁹⁴ See Damaschin Mioc and Marieta Adam Chiper, ed., *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, vol. V (1551-1565), (București: Editura Academiei, 1983), no. 218, pp. 236-237.

Appendix 4: The military challenges to the Wallachian throne (1531-1593)

Year	Ruling lord	Challenger	Battle
1536 ⁹⁵	Radu Paisie	Unnamed	
1536 ⁹⁶	Radu Paisie (Ottoman-backed)	Unnamed	
1539 ⁹⁷	Radu Paisie	Șerban from Izvorani	
1539 ⁹⁸	Radu Paisie (Ottoman-backed)	Șerban from Izvorani	
1544 ⁹⁹	Radu Paisie	Laiotă Basarab	
1544 ¹⁰⁰	Radu Paisie (Ottoman-backed)	Laiotă Basarab	Gipsy's Fountain
1546 ¹⁰¹	Mircea the Shepherd	Unnamed	Periș
1548 ¹⁰²	Mircea the Shepherd	Unnamed	
1552 ¹⁰³	Mircea the Shepherd	Radu Ilie (Hungarian-backed)	Mănești
1553 ¹⁰⁴	Mircea the Shepherd (Ottoman and Moldavian-backed)	Radu Ilie	
1559 ¹⁰⁵	Peter the Young	Unnamed	Românești

⁹⁵ See Ștefan Andreescu, “Frământări politice în Țara Românească la începutul domniei lui Radu Paisie”, *Revistă de istorie*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1976), pp. 395-412.

⁹⁶ See Ștefan Andreescu, “Frământări politice în Țara Românească la începutul domniei lui Radu Paisie”, *Revistă de istorie*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1976), pp. 395-412.

⁹⁷ Ion Radu Mircea, “Țara Românească și închinarea raielii Brăila”, *Balkanica*, Vol. 4 (1941), pp. 471-475.

⁹⁸ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 211.

⁹⁹ See Ion Nania, “Datarea și localizarea celor două lupte de la Fântâna Țiganului date între Radu Paisie și Laiotă Basarab”, *Revistă de istorie*, Vol. 5, No. 1-2 (1994), pp. 155-160.

¹⁰⁰ As the sources are contradictory, there is a debate among Romanian scholars with regard to the precise dating of this battle, see Marian Coman, “Memoria războiului în documentele de cancelarie ale Țării Românești. Hrisoavele Goleștilor”, p. 320.

¹⁰¹ Virgil Cândea, “Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292-1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim”, p. 686.

¹⁰² See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 229-230.

¹⁰³ Virgil Cândea, “Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292-1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim”, p. 686.

¹⁰⁴ See above footnote 28.

¹⁰⁵ See Virgil Cândea, “Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292-1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim”, p. 686.

1559 ¹⁰⁶	Peter the Young (Ottoman-backed)	Unnamed	Șerpăntești
1559 ¹⁰⁷	Peter the Young (Ottoman-backed)	Unnamed	Boiani
1574 ¹⁰⁸	Alexandru II Mircea	Vintilă (Moldavian- backed)	Jilișteea
1574 ¹⁰⁹	Alexandru II Mircea (Ottoman-backed)	Vintilă	Bucharest
1580 ¹¹⁰	Mihnea the Renegade	Radu Popa	

Appendix 5: The military challenges to the Wallachian throne (1593-1632)

Year	Ruling lord	Challenger	Battle
1595 ¹¹¹	Michael the Brave	Ștefan Bogdan (Ottoman- backed)	Călugăreni
1600 ¹¹²	Michael the Brave	Simion Movilă (Poland and Moldavian-backed)	Bucov, Argeș
1601 ¹¹³	Simion Movilă	Unnamed	Nișcov
1601 ¹¹⁴	Simion Movilă (Poland and Moldavian- backed)	Unnamed	Buzău

¹⁰⁶ See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, Vol. I. Secolele XIV-XVI*, p. 248.

¹⁰⁷ See Virgil Cândea, “Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292-1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim”, p. 686.

¹⁰⁸ See Dinu C. Giurescu, *Ion Vodă cel Viteaz*, (București: Editura Militară, 1974), pp. 58-61.

¹⁰⁹ See Virgil Cândea, “Letopisețul Țării Românești (1292-1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim”, p. 687-688.

¹¹⁰ See *Istoria Țării Românești (1290-1690). Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, ed. C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu, pp. 53.

¹¹¹ See Dan Simonescu, “Cronica lui Baltasar Walther despre Mihai Viteazul în raport cu cronicile interne contemporane,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. 3 (1959), p. 68.

¹¹² See Ilie Minea, “Despre lupta de la Teleajen, octombrie 1600”, *Cercetări Istorice*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1928), pp. 150-156.

¹¹³ See Ilie Corfus, “Documente privitoare la domnia lui Simion Movilă în Țara Românească,” *Codrul Cosminului*, Vol. 10 (1939), p. 164.

¹¹⁴ See Dumitru Ciurea, “Domnia munteană a lui Simion vodă Movilă”, *Cercetări Istorice*, Vol. 13-14, No. 1-2, (1937-1940), pp. 113-132.

**THE BATTLE FOR THE THRONE: WALLACHIAN PRETENDERS AND
OTTOMAN TROOPS (EARLY 15th C. – EARLY 17th C.)**

1602 ¹¹⁵	Simion Movilă	Radu Mihnea (Ottoman-backed)	Crețești
1602 ¹¹⁶	Simion Movilă	Radu Șerban (Habsburg-backed)	Ogretin, Teișani
1603 ¹¹⁷	Radu Șerban	Radu Mihnea (Ottoman-backed)	Danube regions
1609-1610 ¹¹⁸	Radu Șerban	Gabriel Báthory (Transylvanian-backed)	
1611 ¹¹⁹	Radu Mihnea	Radu Șerban (Poland and Moldavian-backed)	
1611 ¹²⁰	Radu Șerban	Radu Mihnea (Ottoman-backed)	Bucharest
1617 ¹²¹	Alexander Iliăș	Unnamed	
1618 ¹²²	Alexander Iliăș	Unnamed (Transylvanian-backed)	
1623 ¹²³	Alexander the Child	Paisie the Monk	In the Oltenia region
1631 ¹²⁴	Leon Tomșa	Matthew Basarab	Bucharest
1632 ¹²⁵		Radu Iliăș (Ottoman-backed, Moldavian-backed) Matthew Basarab (Ottoman-backed)	Plumbuita (Bucharest)

¹¹⁵ Ion Ionașcu, “Date noi relative la domnia lui Radu vodă Mihnea în Țara Românească”, *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, Vol. 3 (1961), pp. 699-719.

¹¹⁶ Manfred Stoy, “Radu Șerban, Fürst der Walachei 1602-1611, und die Habsburger. Eine Fallstudie,” *Südost Forschungen*, Vol. 54 (1995), pp. 49-103.

¹¹⁷ Ion Ionașcu, “Date noi relative la domnia lui Radu vodă Mihnea în Țara Românească”, *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, Vol. 3 (1961), pp. 699-719.

¹¹⁸ Ștefan Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae. Vol. 2. Realitățile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1601-1659*, pp. 94-95.

¹¹⁹ Elvire Georgesco, “Dépêches de Sir Thomas Glower à Lord Salisbury”, *Mélanges de l'École Roumaine en France*, Vol. 12 (1934), pp. 28-29.

¹²⁰ Constantin Rezachevici, “Les relations politiques et militaires entre la Valachie et la Transilvanie au début du XVIIe siècle”, *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, Vol. 11, No. 5, (1972), pp. 761-772.

¹²¹ Remus Ilie, “Date necunoscute în legătură cu moartea paharnicului Lupul Mehedințeanu”, *Revista Istorică Română*, Vol. 9 (1939), pp. 274-280

¹²² See above footnote 51.

¹²³ See *Istoria Țării Românești (1290-1690). Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, ed. C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu, p. 53.

¹²⁴ See above footnotes 3 and 4.

¹²⁵ See above footnotes 3 and 4.

A BOGDANIAN BEG IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: DIMITRIE CANTEMIR

Demet AKTEPE*

Abstract

This biographical study delves into the life of Dimitrie Cantemir, arguably the most pivotal figure in Turkish-Romanian cultural relations. The discourse encompasses Cantemir's life, family background, personality, political and social affiliations, as well as his multifaceted works. At the tender age of 16 in 1689, Cantemir arrived in Istanbul, where he resided for a cumulative 22 years. His education, which commenced in Moldavia and later transitioned to the Orthodox Patriarchate and Enderun in Istanbul, was significantly shaped by this multicultural milieu. Today, while his contributions to historiography and music stand out, Cantemir's scholarly prowess spanned diverse fields, including politics, geography, philosophy, architecture, theology, and grammar. Through his works, Cantemir bridged the East and West, presenting a distinctive synthesis of both cultures.

Keywords: Cantemir, Edvar, Turkish Music, Music History, Military History, Ottoman History, Moldova History.

Introduction

Dimitrie Cantemir, an important figure in Ottoman political, social and cultural history, lived in Istanbul for many years. During the Prut War between the Ottomans and Russia, although he was appointed as Bogdanian Voivode by the Ottoman Empire, he took the Russian side, but after the war ended in favor of the Ottomans, he took refuge in Russia and continued his life there.

Cantemir, an intellectual who was well-versed in many Eastern and Western subjects, wrote many works. However, among these works, "Ilm'l-Musiki 'ala vechi'l-hurufat" is very important for the history of

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Turkish music. This opus is distinct from prior music theory treatises in multiple ways. Cantemir recorded hundreds of instrumental pieces using his unique notation system but also ensured their preservation for posterity.

This study has been prepared as a biography containing basic information about Dimitrie Cantemir's life. Cantemir's arrival in Istanbul and the events that followed; his education, his interests, his close friends, his position in the Ottoman-Russian relationship, and his works were discussed, and his importance for Turkish music was emphasized.

1. Dimitrie Cantemir's Arrival in İstanbul

Dimitrie Cantemir, also known as Kantemiroğlu, holds a revered position in both European and Ottoman cultural annals. Born in 1673 in the village of Silișteni, Vaslui, he was the offspring of Constantine, the Moldavian voivode.¹ The locally prevalent name, Timircan, evolved into Cantemir over time.² In his literary works, Dimitrie traces his lineage to Tamerlan-Timur, thereby implying a distinguished ancestry. He posits that his Tatar forebears, originally from Crimea, settled in Moldavia and embraced Christianity in the 15th century.

His father Constantin Cantemir was renowned for his valor in combat. Despite his humble origins and lack of formal education, Constantin was astute in political matters. Fluent in Turkish and Tatar, he remained devoted to the Turks. He sided with the Ottomans against Poland and was anointed as the hospodar of Moldavia in 1685.

Upon Constantin's appointment as the Beg of Moldavia by the Ottoman Empire, Dimitrie was sent to Babiali as collateral, replacing his older brother Antiyoh. This marked the commencement of his 22-year sojourn in Istanbul. When he arrived in 1689³, he was proficient in Latin,

¹ The "voivoda", known as the collector, whose history dates back to the 15th century and who collected high tax revenues in the Ottoman finance; It became widespread in the 16th century, and from the second half of the century, high-ranking military class members, senior state officials and members of the palace were authorized to collect their income. Erol Özvar, "Voyvoda" *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Encyclopedia*, Vol. 43, (2001), p. 129.

² Mihai Maxim, "Kantemiroğlu", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Encyclopedia*, Vol. 24, (2001), p. 320.

³ Cristina Birsan, *Dimitrie Cantemir and the Islamic World*, (İstanbul: The ISIS Press, 2004), p. 15. Cantemir's arrival date in Istanbul; It was stated as 1688 by Mihai Maxim (Mihai Maxim, "Kantemiroğlu", p. 320) and 1687 by Çobanoğlu (Dimitri Kantemir,

Greek, and Slavic languages, and had an eclectic education ranging from theology to weaponry.⁴ In Istanbul, he endeavored to learn Arabic and Persian alongside Ottoman Turkish. At the behest of the Ahmet III, Cantemir was educated at Enderun, benefiting from the mentorship of luminaries such as poet Nef'iođlu, poet-musician Râmi Mehmet Pasha, painter Levnî Çelebi, and mathematician Esad Efendi.⁵ He further honed his philosophical knowledge, aligning himself with the burgeoning humanist movements in Europe.⁶

In 1699, Cantemir wedded Cassandra, the progeny of the Wallachian Voivode Şerban Cantacuzino.⁷ Post 1718, he pivoted towards the political arena of the Russian Empire, relocating to Petersburg. There, he married Princess Anastasia Ivanovna Trubetskoya as his second wife. Subsequently, he was appointed as a Senate member, a confidential advisor to the Tsar, and an expert on Oriental matters.⁸

2. Dimitrie Cantemir in the Ottoman Political and Social Environment

Highly knowledgeable, intelligent, talented, imaginative, kind, and articulate, Dimitrie Cantemir was well-versed in both Eastern and Western cultures, appreciating the aesthetics of both. Ottoman historian Faroqhi notes that the emergence of a figure like Dimitri Cantemir must be viewed in a context that spans both Islamic and Christian civilizations.⁹ Faroqhi emphasizes that Cantemir's presence was not an isolated phenomenon; the interaction between Muslims and Christians, coexisting in the Ottoman Empire for centuries, is a common thread in the history of Balkan culture. He also highlights the dominant culture of the Muslim elite that influenced

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi. trans. Ö. Çobanođlu, (Ankara: Cumhuriyet Books, 2002), p. 20 (Translator's Introduction).

⁴ Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, p. 20 (Translator's Introduction); Mihai Maxim, "Kantemirođlu", p. 320.

⁵ Mehmet Nazmi Özalp, *Türk Müsiki Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2000), p. 360.

⁶ Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, p. 20 (Translator's Introduction).

⁷ Cristina Birsan, *Dimitrie Cantemir and the Islamic World*, p. 15.

⁸ Cristina Birsan, *Dimitrie Cantemir and the Islamic World*, p. 18.

⁹ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Tarihi Nasıl İncelenir*, trans. Z. Altok, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publisher, 1999), p. 267.

their non-Muslim counterparts.¹⁰ Echoing this sentiment, İnalçık comments, “Cantemir was as much a product of the cultural and intellectual life of Istanbul as he was a pivotal figure shaping the new cultural orientation at the Ottoman capital.”¹¹

In the vibrant atmosphere of Istanbul, amid a cultural renaissance, Cantemir forged significant friendships. His associations with key figures, spanning politics to art, both local and international, civilian and military, not only enriched his understanding of the Ottoman Empire but also amplified the respect and support he received. Sources indicate that among the guests at his gatherings and his music students were individuals like Davul İsmail Efendi from the Crimean Khanate and Hazinedar Latif Çelebi. Prominent Ottoman statesmen such as Hazinedar İbrahim Pasha, Defterdar Firari Hasan Pasha, Rami Mehmed Pasha, Kalaylıköz Ahmed Pasha, Baltacı Mehmed Pasha, Latif Çelebi, and Daltaban Mustafa Pasha, as well as celebrated artists like miniaturist Levni, were also in his circle.¹² Furthermore, Dimitrie was an art collector, painter, and had a keen interest in architecture.

His soaring popularity, however, also bred suspicion. In fact, various speculations arose regarding his authenticity. Some went as far as to claim he was not Constantin’s son, labeling him an impostor, and even suspected an escape plan. Eugenia Popescu Judetz describes this sentiment, stating, “In Istanbul’s cosmopolitan setting, Cantemir’s intriguing personality assumed a mystical aura, evoking a blend of curiosity and distrust.”¹³ The subsequent Prust War would further vindicate these suspicions about Cantemir.

3. Voivode Dimitrie Cantemir and the Prut War

Historically, the Ottomans consulted the Crimean Khanate before making crucial decisions about Russia and Lehistan. Devlet Giray Khan, called to Istanbul for this consultation, highlighted the Russian breaches of peace agreements to Sultan Ahmet III in November 1710, emphasizing the

¹⁰ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Tarihi Nasıl İncelenir*, p. 267.

¹¹ Mihai Maxim quoted by İnalçık; Cristina Birsan, *Dimitrie Cantemir and the Islamic World*, p. 9 (Maxim’s Introduction).

¹² Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, p. 461; Cristina Birsan, *Dimitrie Cantemir and the Islamic World*, p. 16, 83; Mihai Maxim, “Kantemiroğlu”, p. 320.

¹³ Eugenia Popescu-Judetz, *Prens Dimitrie Cantemir*, (İstanbul: Pan, 2000), p. 20.

looming threat posed by the Russian Tsar.¹⁴ Consequently, Ahmet III became persuaded of the need to engage in war against the Russians.¹⁵ In a “Grand Divan” meeting on November 20, the persistent Russian disregard for the peace treaty of 1700 was discussed. The Russians, it was noted, continually schemed and acted against the Ottomans and posed a direct threat to Ottoman territories.¹⁶ An ensuing “fetva¹⁷” officially declared war against the Russians.

Influential in the declaration of war, Devlet Giray Khan also played a role in a pivotal decision: appointing Dimitrie Cantemir as the Voivode of Bogdania. This appointment was facilitated significantly by Davul Ismail Efendi, Cantemir’s close ally and the Crimean Khan’s “kethüda¹⁸”. Rumors even suggest Cantemir bribed officials for this appointment.¹⁹ Thus, on November 25, 1710, Cantemir became the Voivode of Bogdan.

Tsar Pedro, despite sending reconciliatory letters to the Ottoman court, was actively preparing for war. With the help of Christian clergymen, Russia sought allies in Christian-majority Ottoman territories, promising liberation from Turkish rule. The Russians viewed an alliance with Cantemir as pivotal. Ragusan Sava, Tsar Pedro’s Eastern affairs adviser, was tasked with this.²⁰

Cantemir’s writings on Ottoman history detail his alliance with Tsar Pedro. Following his voivodeship proclamation, the Sultan promised

¹⁴ Kurat quoted by Raşit History; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, Vol. 1, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1951), p. 163-164.

¹⁵ In fact, Ahmet III and his environment did not want to take the matter to war with the Russians. However, the Janissaries and the clergy demanded a declaration of war against the Russians; otherwise, a movement against the sultan would come into question. There was also the issue of the King of Sweden, who had fled from the Russians and sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire. There was an increasing hostility to the Russians in the people of Istanbul and the palace should have considered this. For all these reasons for the decision to declare the war, see Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*.

¹⁶ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, Vol. 1, p. 168.

¹⁷ The meaning of “fetva” is the answer explaining the religious-legal ruling of a fiqh issue. See Fahrettin Atar, “Fetva”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, (1995), p. 486.

¹⁸ Crimean Khan’s chamberlain in Istanbul.

¹⁹ Neculce writes that the bribe was given to the sadrazam/grand vizier (Mihai Maxim, “Kantemiroğlu”, p. 320; Kurat quoted by Nusretname, writes that it was given to the Khan. See Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, p. 179.

²⁰ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, Vol. 1, p. 327.

Cantemir Tatar soldiers, perpetual rulership over Bogdan, and tax exemptions.²¹ However, a later letter from the sadrazam's officer, Osman Ağa, made Cantemir doubt these promises. In response, he reached out to Tsar Pedro, offering his allegiance and the principality's service.²² Their agreement emphasized Cantemir's dominion over Bogdan and provisions for asylum in Russia should the Russians lose the war.²³ Mehmet Yazıcı Efendi, the commander of the Turkish union in Iași, condemned Cantemir's betrayal. However, Cantemir's alliance with the Russians was solidified.²⁴ But the unchanging fact is that Cantemir secretly signed an agreement with Tsar Pedro and after this agreement, he unfurled the flag of rebellion and went over to the Russians.²⁵

Believing the Ottoman Empire was on the decline, Cantemir's alliance with Russia had disastrous effects for Bogdan. The Prut War saw many Bogdanians perish, with Crimean forces plundering the region.²⁶ After these events, for over a century (1711-1821), the Ottoman government appointed voivodes from the Fener Greeks, not trusting local leaders.²⁷ Post the Prut War, which saw the Russians defeated, Cantemir sought refuge in Russia and passed away in Kharkov, Ukraine in 1723.

4. Cantemir's Works

During his stay in Istanbul, Cantemir saw the reigns of four sultans and witnessed the political, social and cultural changes in the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the friendships he made with high-level state officials during this period enabled him to get to know many areas of this country, from its politics to its institutions. Indeed, his deep knowledge of the Ottoman Empire is evident in the books he wrote on Turkish music and Ottoman history.

²¹ Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, p. 862.

²² Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, p. 862.

²³ For the content of the agreement, see Kurat, quoted from Neculce, Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, Vol. 1, p. 331-336.

²⁴ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı 1123 (1711)*, Vol. 1, p. 368.

²⁵ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. 4, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), p. 63; Voltaire, *XII. Şarl'ın Tarihi*, trans. N. Sırrı, (İstanbul: Hilmi, 1939), p. 212-213.

²⁶ Mihai Maxim, "Kantemiroğlu", p. 320.

²⁷ Mihai Maxim, "Kantemiroğlu", p. 320.

However, in 1714, while in exile in Russia, Cantemir joined the Academy of Sciences in Berlin. At their request, he produced a series of historical, geographical, and ethnographic studies. These works unveiled previously unknown information about the lesser-known regions of the East to the European audience.²⁸ He wrote these treatises in Latin, which was then considered the international language for Western elites.²⁹

His most renowned work is “Incrementorum et decrementorum Aulæ Othmanicæ historia”, which focuses on Ottoman history. In this manuscript, Cantemir does more than just present a chronological account based on the order of sultans. He also provides details on many facets of the Ottoman Empire unfamiliar to European historians: state organization, the army, insights about Islam, traditions, beliefs, and daily life in Islamic society. Distinguishing him from other European Ottoman historians, Cantemir extensively sourced from local materials and incorporated his own observations into political and socio-cultural evaluations.

The first English rendition of this work, translated by Nicholas Tindal, was released in London in 1734, 1735, and 1756 as “The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire”. Tindal’s version made interpretative adjustments to some intricate sections and omitted others entirely.³⁰ Still, in 1985, Romanian scholar Virgil Candea discovered Cantemir’s original manuscript in Harvard University’s library. A revised Latin edition, accompanied by detailed critiques from Romanian philologist Dan Slusanschi, was published in 2002.³¹

²⁸ Claudia Tărnăuceanu, “Demetre Cantemir et la Civilisation Musulmane”, *Annales du Patrimoine - Université de Mostaganem*, Vol. 11, (2011), p. 84.

²⁹ Claudia Tărnăuceanu, “Demetre Cantemir et la Civilisation Musulmane”, p. 84.

³⁰ Claudia Tărnăuceanu, “Demetre Cantemir et la Civilisation Musulmane”, p. 84. According to the information given by Tărnăuceanu, the German, Italian, Romanian and Turkish translations of the work were made from this English translation. As a matter of fact, the work translated into our language in three volumes by Özdemir Çobanoğlu under the title “*Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*” is from the copy translated into Romanian by Dr. Ios Hodosiu in Bucharest in 1876 and published by the Romanian Academy. For his statement of Çobanoğlu, see: Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, trans. Ö. Çobanoğlu, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1979), p. IV.

³¹ Claudia Tărnăuceanu, “Demetre Cantemir et la Civilisation Musulmane”, p. 85.

Apart from his writings on Ottoman history, Cantemir explored various other subjects, highlighting his diverse interests and perspective. Some of these works include:

“Compendiolum Univerae Logices Institutiones” - Located in the Tocilescu Bibliotic archive in Moscow, this 1701 Latin treatise is a summation of universal logic definitions. Here, Cantemir uniquely approaches fundamental historical and political issues.³²

“Divanul Sau Gâlceava Înțeleptului cu Lumea” - A philosophical dialogue penned in both Latin and Romanian, it delves into the conflict between the soul and body, borrowing ideas from Western and Persian didactic literature.

“Historia Moldo-Vlachica, Descriptio Moldaviae” - This work covers the geography, history, language, institutions, and traditions of Moldavia.³³

“De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus” - Discussing the old and contemporary names related to Moldavia, this piece also touches upon the history of Moldavia and the Romanian populace.³⁴

“Vita Constantini Cantemyrii” - Here, Cantemir narrates his father’s biography.

“Istoria Ieroglyfica (Hieroglyphic History)” - Regarded as a political allegory, this cryptic work is loaded with metaphorical meanings and centers around animal-centric fables. It narrates the tale of the Bagdan and Wallachian boyars and their relations with the Ottoman State.³⁵

“Sistem al religiei Muhammedane” - This controversial piece, initially censored by the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate, discusses Islam, its tolerance, and subjects like the linguistic beauty of the Qur’an, Turkish-Islamic calligraphy, the superiority of dervishes over Christian monks, and the forbiddance of coerced conversion

³² Ecaterina Tarălungă, *Dimitrie Cantemir*, (Romanya: Editura Minerva, 1989), p. 21.

³³ Mihai Maxim, “Kantemiroğlu”, p. 322.

³⁴ Ecaterina Tarălungă, *Dimitrie Cantemir*, p. 30.

³⁵ Ecaterina Tarălungă, *Dimitrie Cantemir*, p. 22; Cristina Birsan, *Dimitrie Cantemir and the Islamic World*, p. 17.

to Islam.³⁶ However, according to Tarălungă, Cantemir completes a political effort he aimed for when he demanded to present explanations about Islam to Russia. In fact, the campaign that Cantemir tried to legitimize and propose to the Russian tsar was to gather the Christians who wanted to get rid of the Ottomans under a flag.³⁷

“İlm’l-Musiki ‘ala vechi’l-hurufat” - The only known copy of the work is registered at Istanbul University Institute of Türkiyat Studies. Cantemir’s sole work in Turkish, proving his proficiency in the language. The musical notations in the manuscript have been rendered into Western notation by various authors, with Yalçın Tura undertaking a more detailed study accompanied by a facsimile edition and annotations.³⁸

5. Cantemir’s Music

Cantemir’s accomplishments in music significantly contributed to his recognition by the Ottoman officials. He initially learned the foundational principles of music from his first tutor, the renowned composer and virtuoso, Cacavelas of Crete³⁹, Cantemir furthered his studies under the guidance of Tanburî Angeliki and Kemânî Ahmed Çelebi for fifteen years. As noted by Neculce and Costin, Cantemir was occasionally invited to perform on the tanbur at gatherings of both civilian and military dignitaries.⁴⁰

However, his most important achievement in music is the writing of “Kitabü ‘İlmi’l-Musiki ‘ala vechi’l-hurufat”, known as Kantemiroğlu EdvarKantemiroğlu Edvar delves into the original Ottoman/Turkish music, which originated in the latter half of the 16th century and flourished

³⁶ Mihai Maxim, “Kantemiroğlu”, p. 322.

³⁷ Ecaterina Tarălungă, *Dimitrie Cantemir*, p. 35.

³⁸ For the book, see; Kantemiroğlu, *Kitâbu İlmi’l-Musiki alâ Vechi’l-Hurufât-Musikiyi Harflerle Tesbit ve İcra İlminin Kitabı*, ed. Y. Tura, (İstanbul: YKY, 2001).

³⁹ Seyit Yöre, “Osmanlı/Türk Müzik Kültüründe Levanten Müzikçiler”, *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları*, Vol. 24, (2008), p. 419.

⁴⁰ Georges Cioranescu, “Dimitri Cantemir’in Doğubilim Araştırmalarına Katkısı (La contribution de Dèmètere Cantemir aux études orientales)”, *Turcica, Revue d’etudes turques*, trans. Z. Arıkan, Vol. 7, (Paris-Strasbourg, 1975), p. 205. See <http://www.halksahnesi.org/1992/06/08/dimitri-kantemirin-dogubilim-arastirmalarina-katkisi-georges-cioranescu/> (accessed 06.10.2023).

throughout the 17th century. The first section of this two-part work focuses on theory, while the second provides the notations for three hundred and fifty peşrev and saz semais. In his historical account, “The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire”, Cantemir revealed that he utilized a self-devised notation system for the repertory section of the Edvar. He dedicated this seminal musical work to Sultan Ahmet.⁴¹ His innovative notation, based on letters, also encompassed his own compositions. The maqam descriptions in the theoretical segment, just like the notation method employed by Cantemir in Edvar, showcase a highly unique style, diverging from earlier edvars. Behar posits that Cantemir’s approach in music is both radical and reformative, reflecting a pioneering spirit.⁴² Kitâbu İlmi’l-Musiki alâ Vechi’l-Hurufât contains a new classification of maqams and an explanation of a new method of analysis. According to him, maqams are a framework consisting of a collection of melodic patterns that shape the design of a composition in a certain way and contain pitch-field characteristics⁴³. Thus, melodic weaves shape the design of a composition.

Conclusion

Among Cantemir’s books, there are two notable works directly concerning Turkish history and culture. The first is “(i) Incrementorum et decrementorum Aulae Othmanicae Historia”, a history book penned in Latin. The second is a music book written in Turkish, titled “(ii) Ilm’l-Musiki ‘ala vechi’l-hurufat”.

The former, (i) Incrementorum et decrementorum Aulae Othmanicae Historia, was esteemed as the pivotal source on the Ottoman Empire for Western audiences until the advent of Josep von Hammer Purgstall’s “Geschichtedes Osmanischen Reiches”, also referred to as

⁴¹ Dimitri Kantemir, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Yükseliş ve Çöküş Tarihi*, p. 461; Cem Behar, *Kan Dolaşımı, Ameliyat ve Musiki Makamları: Kantemiroğlu (1673-1723) ve Edvâr’ının Sıra Dışı Müzikal Serüveni*, (İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017), p. 191. Cantemir reports that he dedicated the book to “current emperor Ahmet”. However, what is meant here is Ahmet 2 (t. 1691-1695) according to Sultan Çobanoğlu, and Ahmet 3 (t. 1703-1730) according to Behar. Considering the estimated date of writing of the book, it seems likely that it was written for Ahmet III.

⁴² Cem Behar, *Kan Dolaşımı, Ameliyat ve Musiki Makamları: Kantemiroğlu (1673-1723) ve Edvâr’ının Sıra Dışı Müzikal Serüveni*, p. 56.

⁴³ Eugenia Popescu-Judet, “Kantemiroğlu”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Encyclopedia*, Vol. 24, (2001), p. 322.

Hammer History. The English translation by Tindal was derived from translations of the work in other languages, including Turkish. Remarkably, in 2002, the work was released without alterations to the original manuscript texts from the Houghton Library, and a modern translation has yet to be produced. It remains crucial to reinterpret this work on the Ottoman Empire, a paramount empire in history, directly from the original Latin manuscript into Turkish.

The latter, (ii) *Ilm’l-Musiki ‘ala vechi’l-hurufat*, often termed *Kantemiroğlu’s Edvar*, offers insights into the theory of Ottoman/Turkish music. By the close of the 16th century, this music had evolved a distinctive style. The book not only sheds light on this but also houses the notations of an extensive repertoire. Paired with Ali Ufki’s musical manuscripts, it holds immeasurable value for Turkish music. Indeed, these sources have ensured the survival of many Ottoman/Turkish music compositions with their notation intact. Additionally, the theoretical segment of *Cantemir Edvar* elucidates vital technical aspects of Turkish music, encompassing *makam*, *usûl*, and genre.

Beyond its musical context, *Edvar* also stands as a significant historical document. Examining this facet of the work will prove instrumental in discerning the periodic nuances of Turkish music. A more intensive exploration of historical music sources, with a particular focus on *Cantemir Edvarı*, is indispensable for a well-grounded periodization of Turkish music’s history. In this light, we propose the following research recommendations:

Compare the *maqam*, *usûl*, and genre definitions in *Edvar’s* theoretical section with definitions from diverse historical music sources to make periodic delineations.

Scrutinize the compositions annotated in *Edvar*, considering facets like *makam*, *usûl*, genre, form, and composer. Assess the details about the historical epoch and juxtapose them with compositions from various collections of different periods.

Implementing these suggestions can substantially aid in clarifying the elements of Turkish music and in outlining the historical epochs of Turkish music.

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A SHORT PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE CRIMEAN WAR

Adrian-Silvan IONESCU*

Abstract

The Crimean War was the first modern war. Many technical innovations were adopted during the armed conflict: weapons were modernized, railways were used to transport troops and supplies, the telegraph was introduced for rapid communications, and trenches were used to protect troops. The war also saw the appearance of press correspondents, one of the first being the Irishman William Howard Russell, special envoy of *The Times*. Photography was also a new feature, used for the first time as a means of documenting armed events. The Bucharest-based photographer Carol Popp de Szathmari was the first frontline photographer in the world to document the 1854 Danube Campaign. Eleven months after he took his pictures on the Lower Danube, Roger Fenton traveled directly to Crimea and took photographs of Ottoman-British-French allied troops. After the fall of Sebastopol, James Robertson photographed the remains of the city's fortifications. He is also responsible for some portraits of Marshal Omer Pasha. That skilled soldier was the strongman of the day and his face was immortalized by many artists and photographers. The Hungarian painter Constantin Daniel Rosenthal painted a portrait of him a few years earlier when Omer Pasha was in Giurgewo. The Austrian photographer Ludwig Angerer took another remarkable portrait of him.

Portraits of commanding officers and war-inspired compositions were often reproduced in the illustrated magazines. Artists such as Theodor Aman, Adolphe Yvon, Jean-Charles Langlois and Horace Vernet traveled to the theatre of war, producing large-scale paintings of battle scenes. Others, like Isidore Pils, signed just imaginatively war-inspired pictures. The Crimean War produced a rich iconography that is essential to its illustrated history.

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Keywords: Adolphe Yvon, C. D. Rosenthal, C.P. Szathmari, Constantin Guys, Crimean War, Horace Vernet, Isidore Pils, Ludwig Angerer, Omer Pasha, Roger Fenton, Theodor Aman.

The Crimean War was the first large-scale conflict of the 19th century after those of the Napoleonic period. The great European powers were engaged in it: France, England, the Ottoman Empire – labelled “the sick man” -, Russia and Austria (be it only as a strategic occupier of the Romanian Principalities and a pivot of the continental balance). It was a great deployment of forces and means of destruction, with total ignorance of the human element, doomed to destruction.

Although the tactics had not changed at all since the Napoleonic era, during this mid 19th century armed conflict major advances were made that would radically change the traditional methods of combat: the war of overt maneuver of the troops - risky and damaging to both sides through the unnecessary exposure of people - is replaced by the war of positions, with the trenches and fortifications expertly designed by officers from the corps of engineers, the most capable and who stood out, in a brilliant way in both camps, against many commanders of the line units, totally incompetent and disinterested in the fate of their subordinates. The engineering works around Silistra and Sebastopol, coordinated by General Karl Andreevich Schilder and Lieutenant-Colonel Eduard Ivanovich Todleben, respectively, were so well conceived that they had an essential role in Russian successes and in prolonging the war. The mutual mining of the fortifications through galleries dug under the demarcation lines of the front gave a new orientation to engineering activity. Then, the submarine mines of Professor Boris Semionovich Iacobi represented a safe means of defense of the Kronstadt naval base and the Sveaborg fortress.¹ In the naval actions, the superiority of the steam ships, much faster and easier to handle, compared to the sail ships, morally outdated, is demonstrated, although they continued to be loved by the old sailors and the admirals who had done their apprenticeship on them. In the same way, the advantage of using rifled firearms, the accurate carbines possessed by the allied troops, compared to the smooth bore and short-range muskets with which were equipped the Russian defenders, is highlighted.

¹ E. V. Tarlé, *Războiul Crimeii*, Vol. II, (București: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Științifică, 1952), p. 400.

Prince Grigore Sturdza, son of Mihail Sturdza, former ruling prince of Moldavia, converted to the Muslim faith and entered the Ottoman army with the rank of general, under the name of Muchlis Pasha, made his fame during the Battle of Cetate, on the border of the Danube, by riding out in front of his troops, thus exposing himself to enemy fire - which, however, could not touch him because of the short range Russian muskets - and, cold-bloodedly, taking aim to the Russian officers whom he felled with his long range English rifle; he even hit General Anrep's helmet and did not stop firing until the Russians, exasperated by his marksmanship, opened fire with artillery and killed his horse under him.²

For the first time, railways were used to transport troops, fodder and materials on a line built by the Irish engineer James Beatty that connected Balaclava Bay to Kadiköi and the batteries around Sebastopol. Its contribution was essential for supplying the front line troops, although the obtuseness of the British Quartermaster-General and the thick bureaucracy meant that this railway was not used to its maximum capacity until two months after it was put into use. The Commissary-General James Filder preferred the archaic system of transporting supplies on mules or in carts, or left the task of supplying the troops to the commanders of frontline units, each using the means at hand.³ The amount of supplies needed daily was 112 tons of food, fodder and fuel.

The use of electric telegraph also facilitated communication among units on the front to say nothing about the easiness with which the war correspondents – also a *first* for that period - sent their dispatches from headquarters. The Crimean War also holds the primacy in terms of information: during it, accredited press correspondents appeared alongside the belligerent troops, able to send breaking news, correctly collected, verified and solidly documented. The most serious reporters are the British ones. It is symptomatic that three important correspondents were Irish: William Howard Russell, Edwin Lawrence Godkin and James Carlile McCoan. Godkin, the special envoy of the *Daily News* newspaper, was the first to arrive at the front, since October 1853, being affiliated to Omer Pasha's troops and witnessing the first phases of the conflict. However, Russell - correspondent of the famous *The Times* - is the most famous

² "A Brave Boyard", *The Illustrated London News*, No. 669 (18 February 1854), p. 155.

³ David Murphy, *Ireland and the Crimean War*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), p. 162; Robert B. Edgerton, *Pe front în Războiul Crimeii*, trans. Mihai-Dan Pavelescu (București: Meteor Publishing, 2017), pp. 132-134.

journalist and the one who is awarded the credit of having created the modern war reportage. Lord Raglan disliked journalists, and consequently mistreated Russell, did not issue him military rations, and took no action when some officers tore down his tent and drove him from the camp, forcing him to live with servants and workers.⁴

But he also constantly attacked the general staff and the commanders, revealing to the public their utter incompetence, which had such dire repercussions on the common soldiers who lived in misery due to the total disorganization of the army's services. In fact, he was telling the absolute truth. On November 8, 1854, he shared his honest opinion with the editor of *The Times*: "I am convinced that Raglan is totally incapable of commanding an army."⁵

And this was not only the situation in the British army: except for the French commanders who already had the experience of the recent campaigns in Algeria, most of the Russian generals were as poorly trained as the English ones and many had never even participated in an armed conflict. Both in the army of Queen Victoria and in that of Tzar Nicholas I, the higher ranks were reserved for the nobility and promotion was granted through relationships and favours. This fact had dramatic results on the front line, through the hesitant actions and unclear orders given by many generals and commanders of large units.

Russell's reports had another effect, unfavorable to the Allies - that of providing information to the enemy when he described the positions, fortifications and weak points of the Franco-British troops. Tzar Nicholas I once said: "We have no need of spies: we have *The Times*!"⁶

Moreover, most of the commanders were elderly people: Lord Raglan was 65 years old and had not taken part in a battle since 1815, at Waterloo, where he had lost his right arm; Sir George Brown was also 65; Sir John Fox Burgoyne was 71; Sir George de Lacy Evans, 67; Lord Lucan and Lord Cardigan, the British cavalry commanders, were 54 and 57 years old, respectively. The French were a bit younger: St. Arnaud was 52, Mac Mahon was 46, Canrobert 45, Bosquet 44, Prince Napoleon-Jérôme 32. One of the youngest officers in the high command of the Allies was Omer

⁴ Robert B. Edgerton, *Pe front în Războiul Crimeii*, pp. 127-128.

⁵ David Murphy, *Ireland and the Crimean War*, p. 173.

⁶ David Murphy, *Ireland and the Crimean War*, p. 174.

Pasha, the Ottoman marshal, who was 47 years old at the outbreak of the war. This is the first war in which two supreme commanders - Marshals Saint-Arnaud and Lord Raglan - as well as the head of one of the belligerent countries - the Tzar Nicholas I - lost their lives during the conflict, from natural causes and not as a result of wounds received in the fight.

Through the remote areas where it took place and which it affected in one way or another, the Crimean War transcends the European borders and almost takes on the proportions of a world conflict: the land confrontation began on the banks of the Danube, moved to Dobrudja and around Varna then in the Crimea and the Caucasus and the naval one reached the eastern shores of the Black Sea, took place in the Baltic Sea, in the White Sea and in the Far East, in the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Developed on two continents, the war involved large masses of population and caused enormous casualties among the combatants. Statistics have shown that, due to poorly organized or even non-existent health services, the number of deaths from diseases or infections and post-operative complications exceeded four to five times that of those killed in battle.⁷

The consequences of this local conflict transformed into a European conflict with globalization tendencies were felt on the continental economic, social and geo-political level and some of the beneficiaries were the Romanians through the reunification of Moldova with part of the body of Bessarabia and, above all, through the accomplishment of much dreamed and desired Union of the Principalities, in 1859. Given the defeat of Russia, this war constituted a taboo subject to study for Romanian historians during the communist period, because its commentary in papers of some extent would, of course, have disturbed the “great neighboring and friendly country”, the U.S.S.R.

Photography was also a new feature, used for the first time as a means of documenting armed events. Today it is a common thing to learn about a war from newspapers and to see the accompanying pictures taken on the spot a few hours ago. Press photographers risk their lives everyday – some even lose them - on the frontline of armed conflicts somewhere in the world. Nobody seems impressed by their sacrifice, not even themselves. From Korea to Vietnam, Cambodia and Angola, from Bosnia

⁷ Robert B. Edgerton, *Pe front în Războiul Crimeii*, pp. 126, 142-158; John Sweetman, *The Crimean War 1854-1856*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001), p. 89; E. V. Tarlé, *Războiul Crimeii*, Vol. II, p. 130.

to Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine they have followed the troops, mingled with soldiers and shared their life and adventures. In this way, the photojournalists witness the most important moments of modern military history and complete a trustworthy documentation of every campaign. Many of their pictures are awarded such coveted prizes as the Pulitzer Prize for press photography. But in the 1850s, photo-journalism was in its infancy. The photo reporters Szathmari, Fenton, Robertson, Langlois, Méhédin, Durand-Brager are making their appearance on the front, gathering absolutely truthful illustrative material, without the embellishments and subjectivism of the professional artists who more often did not reach the front line and reconstructed the event from the accounts of the participants to which they added their own imagination.

At that time, it was more of a private enterprise than a government commission or a leading newspaper's special concern. It was expensive and cumbersome to take the cameras, tripod, glass plates and the necessary chemicals on the field. A van and a horse team were used for this purpose. Half of the van was used as dark room while the other half was turned into bedroom, dining room and kitchen. The photographer was self-sufficient and self-employed in this kind of project. Unlike nowadays when photojournalists are clad in battle dress, passing unnoticed among other soldiers, the 1850s war photographer kept his civilian clothes on the battlefield and often became an easy target for both opposing sides. The wet collodion technique was still too slow to allow taking snapshots. Consequently, the photographer had to ask soldiers to pose for a few seconds or even minutes. For obtaining good views of trenches and fortifications, he had to expose himself by taking his camera as near as possible to those objectives.

The Bucharest-based artist Carol Popp de Szathmari (1812-1887) was the first frontline photographer in the world to document the 1853-54 Danubian Campaign. A well-known painter and photographer, Szathmari had the great idea to use his skill for catching the many faces of the war waged by Russians and Turks on the Lower Danube. Enterprising and industrious, a master of multitude of artistic expressions, genres and techniques including miniatures, lithography, watercolour, oil on canvas portrait and landscape painting, a passionate traveler with specific interests in ethnography and architectural themes, Szathmari understood the great advantages of photography to capture evanescent moments faster and better than other artistic means. Szathmari used the new process of wet collodion.

The Russian, Austrian and Ottoman troops were based for a while in Bucharest and offered the artist a great opportunity to affirm his talent as well as gain financial rewards. Whether he asked the military commanders for permission to take their likeness, or they just visited his studio, he succeeded in compiling an impressive collection of military portraits. The Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest has a series of glass negatives and copies on salted paper of such studio portraits of officers. They belong to either the Russian or the Austrian armies. On some of these portraits, he later applied soft shades of watercolour.

There are only three pictures with Ottoman soldiers in the patrimony of the Library of the Romanian Academy: besides a Turkish camp with large Sibley tents, standing or seated soldiers all around and a foreground group of five officers clad in capes and fez (Fig. 1) there are other two slightly different compositions with a troop of Turkish cavalymen. In the first one, two troopers are mounted, rifles in hand, while six are dismounted (two standing beside their saddled horses) (Fig. 2). They are wearing dark blue tunics with thirteen rows of silk worsted cord on the front. All their accoutrements are white. The bugler on the left is resting his brass instrument on his hip. The second picture has only the front group of four taken from a different angle, with more contrast in tonality and sharper contours on the white horses; the dismounted cavalryman with his elbow on the saddle appears to be an officer (Fig. 3).



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

There are more pictures with types from the Ottoman Army in The Royal Archives at Windsor. From the twelve pictures that surely belong to the original album produced by Szathmari, nine represent Turkish regular infantrymen, artillerymen and staff officers. They were photographed in the open in order to benefit the natural light. Always grouped four or five at a time, the models are positioned in such a way that all the details of the uniforms and equipment to be revealed.⁸ One of these pictures is of special interest for its central character is Omer Pasha himself. The Turkish marshal is surrounded by his staff and aides-de-camp.⁹

Some of those photographs were used as an inspiration base for coloured lithographs, which Szathmari commissioned to be printed in Vienna, in 1855. In preparation for these lithographs, the artist made watercolour sketches after his own photographs. Those plates are as follows: *Arabian Bashibouzouks* (Fig. 4) and *Bashibouzouk and Arnaout*. (Fig. 5) The captions are in German specifying the photographic base of the composition: “Nach einer von Szathmari vor Oltenitza gefertigten und collorirten Photographie”.

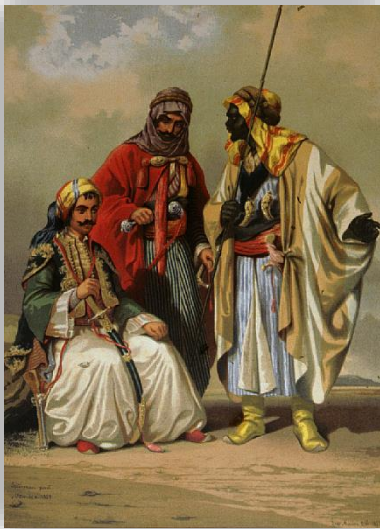


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

⁸ Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, “Fotografii de Carol Szathmari din Războiul Crimeii în colecții americane și britanice”, *Muzeul Național*, Vol. X (1998), pp. 77-78.

⁹ Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, “Omer Pasha’s Portraits”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire de l’Art*, Tome XXXIII (1996), p. 76.

From the same series of Oriental types there is, at the National Military Museum “King Ferdinand I” in Bucharest, a picture of a magnificent *Arnaout* in full costume (Fig. 6). He wears large red shalvar embroidered with gold bullion thread on the sides, a *tschepken* (short jacket with slit sleeves) also fully embroidered, a sash in which he stuck two pistols and a yatagan while another dagger is hanging in front; on his head he has a red fez adorned with a large tassel. He keeps a hand on his trusted carbine to show that he is always ready to use it, if necessary. A coquettish moustache gives a milder touch to his stern, resolute countenance. Unlike the other compositions with bashibouzouks or various Oriental irregulars who were photographed outside, this elegantly clad arnaout has posed inside the photographer’s studio: a silk curtain on the left shows a kind of elegance in that interior. The picture is mounted on cardboard with printed borders and credit “Etablissement Photographique de Charles Szathmari à Bucarest”.

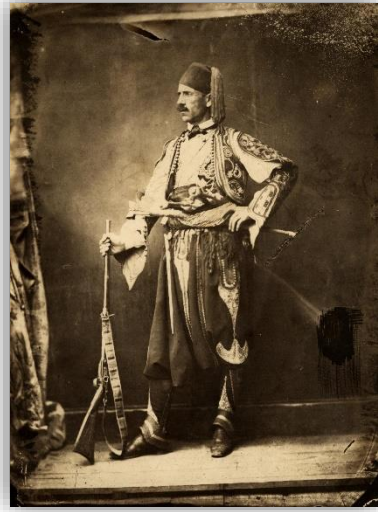


Fig. 6

Bahattin Öztuncay, the outstanding Turkish historian of photography, gives due credit to Szathmari’s photographs in his paper from the catalog of the 2006 exhibition *Kırım Savaşı’nın 150nci Yılı/150th Anniversary of the Crimean War*, organized by Sadberk Hanım Müzesi in Istanbul.¹⁰

The result of Szathmari’s bravery and hard work on the battlefield, often exposed to dangers and privacies, was a comprehensive photographic album of two hundred pictures that he produced and which revealed such vivid images of the war that it could not but be acclaimed as a valuable work by all those who saw it. He exhibited his album at the 1855 Paris Exposition Universelle. His album became famous also due to the pertinent analysis that Ernest Lacan gave it in his book entitled *Esquisses*

¹⁰ Bahattin Öztuncay, “Fotoğraflarla Belgelenen İlk Savaş/The First War Documented through Photography”, *Kırım Savaşı’nın 150nci Yılı/150th Anniversary of the Crimean War*, ed. Bahattin Öztuncay, (Istanbul: Sadberk Hanım Müzesi, 2006), pp. 38, 46.

photographiques. À propos de l'Exposition Universelle et de la Guerre d'Orient, published in Paris 1856. Ernest Lacan was one of the editors of the influential magazine *La Lumière*, the French Photographic Society's publication.

As described by Lacan, the album opens with portraits of Russian and Turkish commanders, General Prince Michail Dimitrievitch Gortschakoff, General Baron Dimitri Erofeevitsch Osten-Sacken, Field Marshal Prince Ivan Fedorovitsch Paskevitsch, Commissioner Alexander Ivanovitsch Budberg, General Pavel Eustatievitch Kotzebue, General Count Orlov, commander of Cossack troops, General Alexander Nicolaevitsch Lüders and two commanders fallen on the battlefield - General Selvan, killed at Silistra and Soimonoff, killed at Inkerman. Besides these portraits, there is one of Omer Pasha, the Turkish commander-in-chief, surrounded by his aids, another of Iskender Bey (Muslim name of Polish Count Antoni Ilinski who volunteered in the Turkish army and distinguished himself in battle), followed by those of young Tefvik Pasha killed at Balaklava, of Dervish Pasha and two officers from the British and French allied armies, Colonels Simmons and Dieu. There are also types of soldiers and local people, infantrymen and Cossacks from the Russian forces, Turkish bashibouzouks (irregular cavalrymen) and nizamyie (regular infantrymen), Austrian lancers, dragoons and infantrymen, a few gypsies and Romanian merchants and artisans.¹¹

In 1855, the press praised this work, which was presented to Napoleon III in a private audience. The periodical *La Lumière*, in its issue of 9th June 1855, enthusiastically reported:

“M. de Szathmari, l’habile amateur photographe de Bucarest, dont nous avons annoncé dernièrement l’arrivée, a eu l’honneur d’être reçu mercredi soir par l’Empereur. LL.MM. ont voulu voir toutes les épreuves que renferme son magnifique album; les portraits des généraux russes et turcs les ont surtout vivement intéressé. Témoin oculaire de bien des scènes qui se rattachent à l’histoire de la guerre d’Orient, ayant connu la plupart des hommes qui se sont distingués dans cette grande lutte, M. de Szathmari a pu donner des détails curieux et qui ont fixé l’attention de LL.MM. L’Empereur a félicité

¹¹ Ernest Lacan, *Esquisses photographiques. À propos de l'Exposition Universelle et de la Guerre d'Orient*, (Paris, 1856), pp. 156-159.

l'auteur de cette intéressante collection, dont il a accepté l'hommage. Nous sommes heureux d'annoncer ce succès qui honore la photographie et qui montre avec quelle bienveillance LL.MM. accueillent et encouragent les progrès de notre art."¹²

Szathmari was also well-received by Queen Victoria at Osborne Castle on the Isle of Wight on 19th July, 1855. The audience lasted a couple of hours for both the queen, Prince Albert and their guest, King Leopold of the Belgians, were deeply interested by those war photographs. *La Lumière*, the same French photographic magazine, stated:

“Les portraits des généraux anglais, français, turcs et russes ont surtout fixé leur attention. La reine a daigné adresser des gracieuses félicitations à M. de Szathmari sur son beau travail et permettre qu'on lui annonçait que S. M. en acceptait l'hommage, et qu'une médaille d'or lui était accordée comme signe de sa haute satisfaction.”¹³

Eleven months after Szathmari took his pictures on the Lower Danube, Roger Fenton (1819-1869) travelled directly to the Crimea and took photographs of Ottoman-British-French allied troops. After the fall of Sebastopol, James Robertson (1813-1881) photographed the remains of the city's fortifications: the Redan, the Malakoff Tower, the docks before and after their demolition by the victors. Both Fenton and Robertson were also responsible for some portraits of Marshal Omer Pasha. That skilled soldier was the strongman of the day and many artists and photographers immortalized his face. A lot of them were published in the European illustrated magazines; others were lithographed and sold to enthusiastic supporters of the war.

The Hungarian painter Constantin Daniel Rosenthal (1820-1851) painted the general's portrait a few years earlier when Omer Pasha was at the head of the Ottoman troops camped on the border of the Danube, during the 1848 Wallachian revolution. In that very moment, he and his army were in Giurgewo, awaiting the orders to advance toward Bucharest. Rosenthal went there to take likenesses to both Suleiman Pasha, the Sublime Porte special commissioner and to Omer Pasha. The preliminary sketches of these important representatives of the Ottoman Empire were published

¹² *La Lumière*, 9 Juin 1855.

¹³ *La Lumière*, 29 Juillet 1855.

anonymously in an 1849 issue of the Leipzig periodical *Illustrirte Zeitung*.¹⁴ While in Giurgewo, Rosenthal scabbled a pencil drawing of Omer Pasha's traits in the notebook of a French friend, the journalist Abdolonyme Ubicini, who accompanied him. Not until five years later – when Rosenthal was no longer alive and Omer was at the apex of his celebrity and military career – was that pencil sketch published. This time it was printed in the Paris magazine *L'Illustration*, but again without quoting the author's name (Fig. 7). Ubicini signed for that periodical a note about Omer Pasha, illustrated with Rosenthal's portrait. In a few lines Ubicini described the circumstances in which that pencil drawing have come into his possession: during one of his visits to Omer Pasha "(...) a young painter who accompanied me – who, unfortunately, died in Hungary in the meantime – made this portrait of a perfect resemblance on a page of my notebook."¹⁵

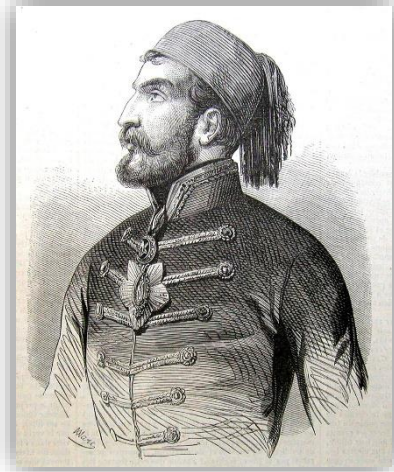


Fig. 7

Although *Illustrirte Zeitung* and *L'Illustration* published the sketches of this portrait, as stated above, the trail went cold, as we know nothing more about the finished painting. Until the 2021 auction at the Artmark House in Bucharest that is, when this presumed lost portrait suddenly surfaced. This is a relatively small oil on cardboard work (26.5 x 21 cm), which represents the brave general in a different posture

¹⁴ *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 316 (21 Juli 1849), p. 34.

¹⁵ A. Ubicini, "Omer Pacha", *L'Illustration*, No. 555 (15 Octobre 1853), p. 249: "J'eus l'occasion de voir plusieurs fois Omer Pacha, en 1848, en Valachie, à l'époque où il commandait le corps expéditionnaire mis à la disposition de Suleïman Pacha, envoyé, peu après son retour de son ambassade de Paris, dans les principautés comme commissaire extraordinaire de la Porte. Ce fut pendant une de ces entrevues qu'un jeune peintre qui m'accompagnait, et qui est mort depuis malheureusement en Hongrie, crayonna, sur une page de mon portefeuille, le portrait d'une exacte ressemblance, qui figure en tête de cet notice. Omer Pacha n'était encore que général de division; mais, il fut, quelques semaines après, promu au grade qu'il occupe aujourd'hui (*muchir*) et qui est le dernier échelon de la hierarchie militaire en Turquie."

from the ones in the sketches published earlier. He was clad in full dress (Fig. 8). Therefore, Rosenthal's artworks catalogue enriches with a portrait known to have been painted, but not known to have survived the vicissitude of time.

A certain G. Wolf made an etching with the general's portrait, using Rosenthal's sketch but omitting to mention the author's name.

Inspired by Rosenthal's drawing, the Austrian lithographer Eduard Weixlgärtner (1816-1873) printed a portrait of the Turkish marshal as a supplement for the newspaper *Wiener Telegraph*. There is a striking resemblance between the two works: the marshal is clad in the same cavalry attila with the Medjidie order hanging from his neck; his head is also drawn in profile, although it is turned over the right shoulder – this being the only change from the initial pose; he is glancing in the same upper direction; the same forelocks are emerging from under his fez (Fig. 9). The caption, in German, reads as follows: *Omer Pascha, Oberfeldherr der türkischen Armee an der Donau*.



Fig. 8

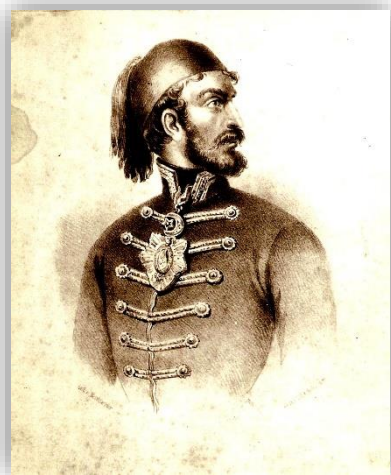


Fig. 9

Two other lithographs are worth mentioning, even though they are almost identical. One of them was edited by Goupil in Paris and signed by Marie-Alexandre Alophe (1812-1883), who eventually became a good photographer; the other was printed in Vienna and signed by Adolf Dauthage (1825-1883). It is difficult to state who copied the other one's work because on both of them, Omer Pasha is portrayed in the same attitude, standing at ease with one hand resting on the bejeweled hilt of his sabre; he is wearing the same outfit and his

countenance has the same expression of strength, courage and wit. While Dauthage's lithograph bears only the marshal's name, Alophe's work is captioned: *S.E. Omer Pacha, Général en Chef de l'Armée de Roumily – Novembre 1853*, followed by a facsimile of the pasha's signature (Fig. 10). All these three lithographs belong to the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest. Advertising Alophe's portraits of the most famous men of the epoch, Goupil listed Omer Pasha's likeness at number 90 (between Napoleon I and Sir Charles Napier).

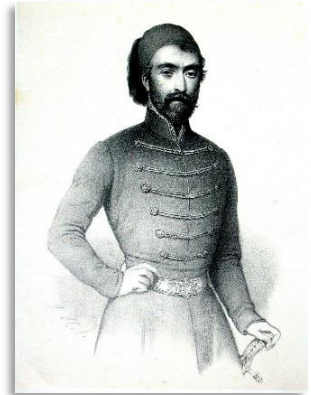


Fig. 10

The Austrian photographer Ludwig Angerer (1827-1879) took a remarkable portrait of Mushir Omer Pasha while he was camped in Bucharest, at the end of the Danube Campaign, after the Russians left the Romanian Principalities, which were eventually occupied by the Austrian troops. At that time, young Angerer was wearing the uniform of the Austrian imperial army as military assistant druggist of the "Kaiserlich-Königliche Feldapothek Nr. 14 in Bukarest". He had plenty of free time and devoted it to photography. Thus, he produced a rich portfolio of documentary pictures immortalizing both military events and day-by-day life of a city still oriental in shape and manners.¹⁶

Angerer used the new wet collodion process for his pictures. For the copies, he used the salted paper. The marshal's portrait is of 23 x 18,5 cm in size showing that Angerer had a rather large size camera, fit both for landscapes and larger compositions.

¹⁶ Anton Holzer, "Im Schatten des Kirmkrieges. Ludwig Angerer Fotoexpedition nach Bukarest (1854 bis 1856). Eine wiederentdeckte Fotoserie im Bildarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek", *Fotogeschichte*, Heft 93/2004, (www.fotogeschichte.info), pp. 23-50; Anton Holzer, "În umbra Războiului Crimeii. Expediția fotografică a lui Ludwig Angerer la București (1854-1856). O serie de fotografii redescoperite la Cabinetul de Stampe al Bibliotecii Naționale Austriece", *Războiul Crimeii. 150 de ani de la încheiere*, ed. Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, (Brăila: Istros Muzeul Brăilei, 2006), pp. 239-266.

The marshal posed with all the finery of his full dress uniform (Fig. 11). The old soldier is captured in almost the same pose as in Rosenthal's 1848 painting, seated and looking into the lens of the camera with his deep, nostalgic eyes. He is dressed in the same full dress uniform, with gold bullion embroideries on the collar, chest and cuffs, to which are fastened all the decorations he possessed including the riband of a grand cross, worn over the right shoulder the badge resting, unnoticed, on the left hip and the stars affixed to the left breast. A parade sword, with a golden saber knot, rests on his thigh. The fez has embroidery on the front that did not exist in Rosenthal's painting. On the other hand, looking at the two images, one can see how carefully the painter reproduced, with his thin brush, the embroidery on the model's tunic. If in the painting, the marshal's beard is only grey at the temples, in the photograph he has it completely white, which denotes rapid ageing; under the influence of the uninterrupted campaigns, he had planned and led. This less known portrait of Omer Pasha belongs to the documentary collection of the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Science in Prague.¹⁷



Fig. 11

When a march composed by Omer Pasha's wife was published in *The Illustrated London News*, the score was illustrated with a sketch by Constantin Guys as a frontispiece.¹⁸ (Fig. 12) It depicted the marshal and his officers riding in front of a cavalry unit, while some other cavalrymen are charging in the background. Unlike other high-ranking Turkish officers of the same period, Omer Pasha was monogamous and his wife was a talented Romanian lady whom he married while he had his headquarters in Bucharest, after the 1848 revolution. That charming Romanian was the sister of a piano player and music teacher of some notoriety at that time, Gheorghe Simonis. Omer Pasha noticed her during a concert held in the capital of Wallachia, when she accompanied her brother. After their marriage, Gheorghe Simonis followed his brother-in-law in the Ottoman Empire and eventually became instrumental in reorganizing the Turkish

¹⁷ I am grateful to Dr. Petra Trnkova, from the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Science in Prag, for facilitating the research and publishing of this picture.

¹⁸ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 684 (27 May 1854), p. 497.

military bands. For his services, he was rewarded with a colonelcy and the title of “bey”¹⁹. With such a talented brother, there is no doubt that Ida, Omer Pasha’s wife, composed marches worth of being published in the British magazine²⁰, as the editors’ token of friendship and courtesy towards her brilliant husband.

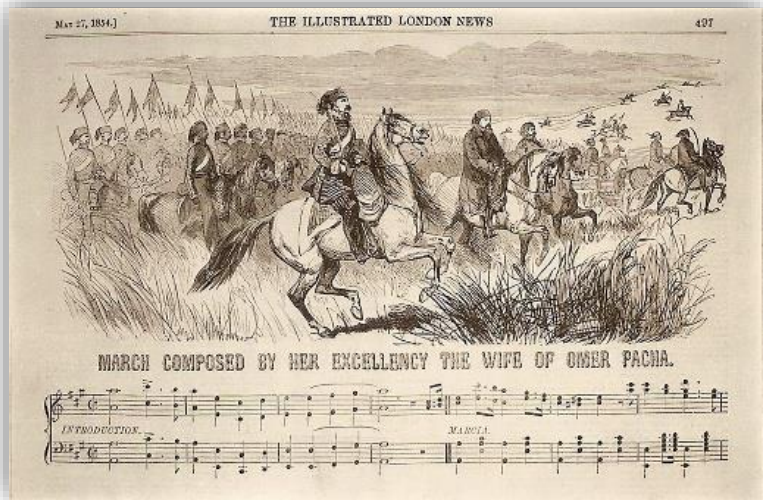


Fig. 12

The French graphic artist Constantin Guys (1803-1892), contributed many other sketches concerning the first stages of the war. Guys was an oddish character, living alone and travelling most of his life. He was a self-educated man discovering his talent when he was forty-years-old. Since then he became a freelance artist contributing with his drawings to various publications. None of his sketches was ever signed and he insisted on being published anonymously. Once a friend and comrade-in-arms of Lord Byron, Guys was much influenced by Romanticism. As he was a wholly romantic prototype, the artist wanted to be wrapped in a

¹⁹ G. Simonis, “Din treacutal muzical al Craiovei”, *Arhivele Olteniei*, nr. 69-70 (Sept.- Dec. 1933), pp. 359-369.

²⁰ Another *March Composed by Her Excellency the Wife of Omer Pasha* was published, without any illustration, in *The Illustrated London News*, No. 723 (13 January 1855), p. 48. Both compositions, *Oltenitza March* and *Silistre March* respectively, were recorded in Turkey, in 2002, under the direction of Emre Araci, on a CD entitled *Savaş ve barış: Kırım 1853-56/ War and Peace: Crimea 1853-56*.

veil of mystery; that is why he favored so much anonymity²¹. Constantin Guys was one of the founders of *The Illustrated London News*.



Fig. 13

At the outbreak of the war, he volunteered to go on the border of the Danube to document the events. For the first four months of 1854, he was the only contributor to the British magazine, sending not only his sketches but also the adjoining correspondence. He was affiliated to Omer Pasha's staff. He had also the honour of being the marshal's guest at Shumla. The audience took place on 17 January 1854. His portrait of the field marshal was published in the last issue of February 1854²². In that drawing, Omer Pasha – who was also the Governor of Shumla – appeared very informally clad, in a plain befurred coat. The long pipe with an amber mouthpiece was held in the pasha's hand (Fig. 13). During his visit, Constantin Guys was accompanied by two British officers, Major Tombs and Captain Austin of the Bengali Horse Artillery. A sketch of the room where they had been received was published in the first issue of March 1854²³ (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14

Afterwards, Guys joined Iskender Bey's bashibouzouks, and was one of the first to reach the outskirts of Bucharest, in the vanguard of the Ottoman troops when the Russians left the Wallachian Capital city. When the theatre of war moved

²¹ Charles Baudelaire, *Curiozități estetice*, trans. Rodica Lipatti, (București: Editura Meridiane, 1971), p. 187, Gustave Geffroy, *Constantin Guys, l'historien du Second Empire*, (Paris, MCMIV), p. 33; Luce Jamar-Rolin, "La vie de Guys et la chronologie de son œuvre", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Tome Quarante-huitième, (Juillet-Août, Septembre 1956), pp. 70-110; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, "Constantin Guys, reporter de front la Dunărea de Jos în timpul Războiului Crimeii", *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei, Seria Artă Plastică*, No 39 (1992), pp. 87-103.

²² *The Illustrated London News*, No. 670 (25 February 1854), p. 168.

²³ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 671 (4 March 1854), p. 181.

to Crimea, Guys followed the British army. He was an eyewitness of the Battle of Inkerman. As a vivid document of his presence there, he sent a selfportrait showing himself on the grim battlefield, cautiously stepping between dead and wounded, broken weapons and discarded accoutrements. It was published in a February 1855 issue of *The Illustrated London News* (Fig. 15). The editor described the sketch as follows:

”The scene which our Artist has here depicted is one which he witnessed in crossing the battlefield on the 5th of November, at the time when the Russians were retreating. On horseback or foot it was impossible to pass along without treading on the wounded or the dead, so thick was the ground covered with them.”²⁴



Fig. 15

On that occasion he also drew General Carobert’s portrait as he observed the movement of troops from a hill commanding the battlefield.²⁵

Guys was a prolific artist who sent between eight and ten sketches a day to his editor in London:

“(…) Devant Sebastopol il se tenait constamment aux avant-postes à la recherche du document sensationnel.(…) Il travaillait très vite et n’importe où, en vrai journaliste. Tous les jours, de Crimée il envoyait à Londre huit a dix croquis: tantôt il nous transporte aux bords du Danube, aux rives du Bosphore, au cap Kerson, dans la

²⁴ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 726 (3 February 1855), p. 116.

²⁵ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 723 (13 January 1855), p. 33.

pleine de Balaklava, dans les campements anglais, turcs, piémontais, dans les rues de Constantinople; tantôt il nous fait assister au spectacle horrible des blessés.”²⁶

Charles Baudelaire, the admirer of Guys, commented extensively on this sketch and most of his works of art done during the campaign.²⁷ The artist’s contribution to the documentation of the Crimean War is duly emphasized by Luce Jamar-Rolin in his paper of 1956, the most comprehensive sketch of Guys’ life and work ever made.²⁸

In a larger composition, printed at Goupil in 1854, Marie-Alexandre Alophe portrayed all the important commanders of the allied forces in the Crimean Campaign. Omer Pusha ranks among them. The lithograph has the following caption: *Les Défenseurs du Droit et de la Liberté de l’Europe*. The names of the commanding officers are also inscribed under everyone’s figure: *Général Baraguay d’Hilliers, Vice-Amiral Parceval Deschênes, Amiral Plumbridge, Amiral Napier, Schamyl, Contre-Amiral Bruat, Vice-Amiral Hamelin, Amiral Dundas, Omer Pacha, Ismaïl Pacha, Duc de Cambridge, Lord Raglan, General Brown, Prince Napoléon, Maréchal St. Arnaud, General Canrobert*.

A still larger hand-coloured lithograph, drawn by the German painter Gustav Bartsch (1821-1906) and printed by the lithographer Johann Friedrich Hesse portrayed almost the same commanders with their staff, courteously surrounding the Sultan. Besides the French and British high-ranking officers already depicted in the Goupil’s plate several Turkish commanders are included. All of them are on horseback. Among them, two Romanians volunteered in the Ottoman army and received ranks according to their military experience. They are Prince Grigore Sturdza, already mentioned before, and Vasile Obedeanu. The name of everyone is inscribed at the base of the plate: Am[ir]al Hamelin, Lord Raglan, Sir John Campbell, 1er Aide de Camp du Duc de Cambridge, Duc de Cambridge, general de Division, Lord Lucan, Am[ir]al Dundas, general Lord Cardigan, Ismaïl Pacha, G[énérali]ssime Omer Pacha, Mouhliis Pacha (Prince G. Stourdza), Achmet Pacha, Saïd Bey (B. [sic] Obedeano), Capitaine Aide de

²⁶ Jean-Paul Dubray, *Constantin Guys*, (Paris: Les Éditions Rieder, MCMXXX), pp. 20-21.

²⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *Curiozități estetice*, pp. 199-202.

²⁸ Luce Jamar-Rolin, “La vie de Guys et la chronologie de son œuvre”, pp. 81-83, 104-106.

Camp d'Omer Pacha, M[aréch]al Baraguay d'Hilliers, col[onel] Trochu, 1er Aide de Camp du Marechal, Col[onel] Desmaret, 1er Aide de Camp de S.A.I. Le Prince Napoléon, S.A.I. le Prince Napoléon, g[énéral] de Division, général de Division Bosquet, Maréchal de Saint-Arnaud, g[énérali]ssime de l'armée française, général de Division Canrobert. The composition is vivid, the countenances and attitudes are simply accurate. This imposing lithograph is captioned *Campagne de Crimée. L'armée d'Orient 1854*. (Fig. 16)



Fig. 16

Portraits of commanding officers and war-inspired compositions were often reproduced in the illustrated magazines. Thus, one could find in those European periodicals the features of the glorious or not so glorious generals on both sides: Lord Raglan²⁹, prince Paskevitch³⁰, prince Gortschakoff³¹, prince Mentchikoff³², Lüders³³, Schilder³⁴, generals

²⁹ *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 559 (18 März 1854), p. 173.

³⁰ *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 561 (1 April 1854), p. 218.

³¹ *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 558 (11 März 1854), p. 161.

³² *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 558 (5 Novembre 1853), p. 289.

³³ *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 574 (1 Juli 1854), p. 12.

³⁴ *Illustrirte Zeitung*, No. 592 (4 November 1854), p. 296.

Canrobert³⁵, Bosquet³⁶, Pélissier³⁷, admiral Adolphus Slade (Muşaver Pasha)³⁸, sir John Fox Burgoyne³⁹.

In a June issue of *L'Illustration* there is published a drawing depicting the council of war held at Varna by the three allied commanders, Raglan, Saint-Arnaud and Omer Pasha⁴⁰. (Fig. 17) They are attentively studying a map displayed on a table. Other maps, books and the marshals' greatcoats, swords and hats are spread all around on the floor or on a bench near the wall. Saint-Arnaud is standing in order to explain his plans more eloquently while the other two are seated. Three high-ranking Turkish officers are also in attendance.



Fig. 17

The countenance of the rulers of the belligerent countries was also often published in the illustrated magazines: Sultan Abdul Medjid (Fig. 18), Czar Nicholas I (Fig. 19), Emperor Napoleon III (Fig. 20) and Queen Victoria (Fig. 21).

³⁵ *L'Illustration*, No. 607 (14 Octobre 1854), p. 257.

³⁶ *L'Illustration*, No. 609 (28 Octobre 1854), p. 292.

³⁷ *L'Illustration*, No. 716 (15 Novembre 1856), p. 305.

³⁸ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 666 (February 4, 1854), p. 85.

³⁹ *The Illustrated London News*, No. 714 (November 25, 1854), p. 540.

⁴⁰ *L'Illustration*, No. 589 (10 Juin 1854), p. 353.



Fig. 18

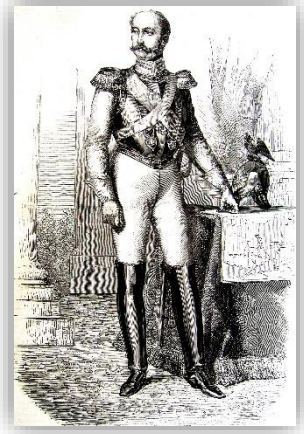


Fig. 19

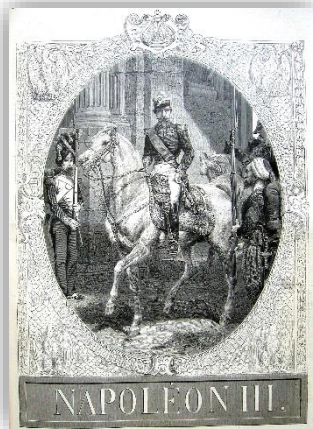


Fig. 20

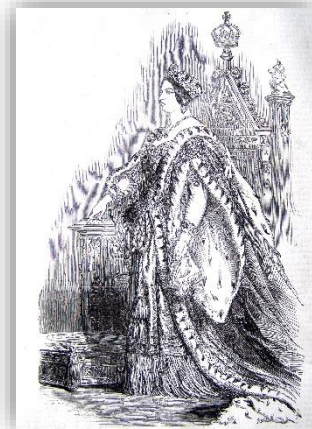


Fig. 21

The young Theodor Aman (1831-1891), studying in Paris, distinguished himself as the first illustrator of the Crimean War. The events caused by the unresolved Oriental Question that were taking place on the Lower Danube, in his native country, inspired him and he began a large-scale work, *The Battle of Oltenitza*. The painting was very well received by the French public, although it was purely the product of fantasy and fashionable conventions in battle scenes, because the artist had not seen the field and had no information from the combatants about how it had unfolded. After completion, the canvas was displayed in the window of the

Goupil art store where it attracted a crowd of curious people to admire it. A small lithograph was executed after this work (Fig. 22). Aman became, overnight, a celebrity and the former French Consul General in the Romanian Principalities and great friend of the Romanians, Adolphe Billecocq, advised him to offer the painting to Sultan Abdul Medjid.



Fig. 22

That was the great chance of Aman's life to travel to Constantinople and experience the oriental ambience at source. The painter presented his work to Sultan Abdul Medjid in 1854; to reward him, the sultan decorated him with the Order of Medjidie besides giving him a large sum of money; the work is still on display at Dolmabahce Sarayi in Istanbul.⁴¹

⁴¹ Dr. C. I. Istrati, *Teodor Aman. Biografie*, (București, 1904), p. 10-22; Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș, *Catalogul Muzeului Aman*, (București, 1908), pp. 14-24; Oscar Walter Cisek, *Aman*, (Craiova, 1931), pp. 5-6, 18-19; G. Oprescu, *Pictorul T. Aman*, (Cernăuți, 1924), pp. 9-10; G. Oprescu, *Pictura românească în secolul al XIX-lea*, (București, 1984), pp. 171-172; Radu Bogdan, *Theodor Aman*, (București, 1955), pp. 26-28, 116, 123; Radu Bogdan, *Reverii lucide*, (București, 1972), p. 242; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Cruce și semilună. Războiul ruso-turc din 1853-1854 în chipuri și imagini*, (București 2001), pp. 128-134; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, "Theodor Aman și Războiul Crimeii", *In Honorem Ioan*

After knowing the smooth and peaceful life in the capital of the empire, imbued with the perfume of the real East as well as that of the “imagination”, Aman had the opportunity to know the battlefield, under the rain of projectiles, in the Crimea, moving with a French warship at Eupatoria and Sebastopol passing by Alma where the great battle had taken place a short time before, giving him the opportunity to take sketches on the spot.

Aman was the first Romanian artist to document himself on a battlefield, he heard the booming of the cannons and smelled the gunpowder, he saw the wounded and the dying, thus having good reasons to show his pride that he had the chance to see, live, the unfolding of a battles. Here is a fragment from a letter he wrote to his elder brother a few days after the battle he witnessed:

“With all the fatigue, hunger and pain in my feet, I felt happy, because I was the only bourgeois <civilian, n. A.S.I.> who could enter and see all this. As an artist, I have seen things that I will never see again. The soldiers seen on the battlefields are not the same as those seen in the city; full of dust or mud, they are not shaved, they are poorly nourished, and incessantly wait for death, not knowing the moment, but always sure of victory. (...) I saw very sad things which you can only realize when you have seen the poor wretches suffering from their wounds and who were hanging two by two on a mule, pale as death, with the arm or the leg taken by a shell, some unconscious and in a deplorable condition; I think I will never forget their attitude when they were leading them to an ambulance that was behind the headquarters, where I was then. (...)”⁴²

Caproșu, ed. Lucian Leuștean, Maria Magdalena Székely, Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, Petronel Zahariuc, (Iași 2002), pp. 407-437.

⁴² Library of the Romanian Academy, Manuscripts, Aman Correspondence S 9 (2)/CXCIV; Dr. C. I. Istrati, *op. cit.*, p. 19; Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș, *Catalogul Muzeului Aman*, pp. 18-19; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, “Theodor Aman și Războiul Crimeii”, *In Honorem Ioan Caproșu*, ed. Lucian Leuștean, Maria Magdalena Székely, Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, Petronel Zahariuc, p. 415.

Aman made several pencil sketches on the occasion of his presence in the middle of the armed conflict: *French infantrymen* (Fig. 23), *Ottoman officers* (Fig. 24), *bashibouzouks*, (Fig. 25) or portraits of tired soldiers (Fig. 26).



Fig. 23



Fig. 26



Fig. 24

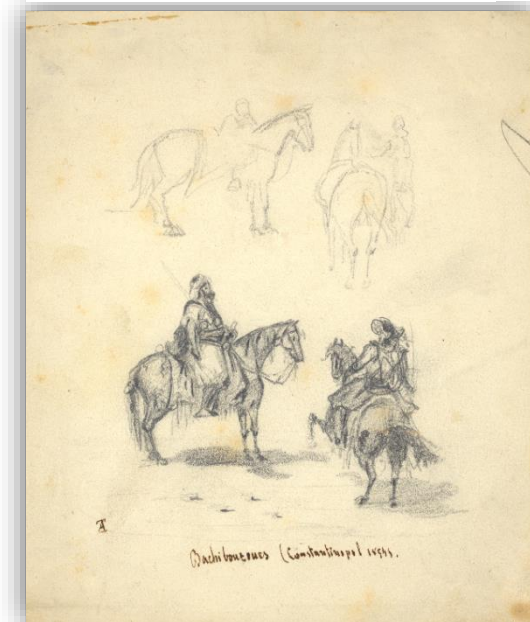


Fig. 25

Later, based on these sketches, he produced an imposing painting in his studio, *The Battle of Alma*. It is the largest canvas the artist ever painted, 194.5 x 324.5 cm. The work was purchased by the Romanian statesman Ion Ghica who exhibited it at the elegant residence he had on his estate in Ghergani, not far from Bucharest. After the communists took political power in Romania and nationalized the properties, in 1948, the peasants plundered the building and took into possession this remarkable work of art which, being large enough and waterproof (as being an oil painting), was used for a time...as wagon cover! It was discovered by the historian George Potra who managed to recover it and gave it to the National Museum of Art in Bucharest, where it is now on display.

The graphic artist William Simpson (1823-1899), arrived in the Crimea as a “special artist” for the periodical *The Illustrated London News* to which he regularly sent, for a year, until after the fall of Sebastopol, sketches from the front and comments on the evolution of the campaign. These sketches were later lithographed and published in an album of 40 plates entitled *The Seat of War in the East*.

The painter Adolphe Yvon (1817-1893), sent to the front after the fighting was concluded, in early 1856, to document the main battles of the campaign, painted three large compositions: *Capture of the Tower of Malakoff*, *French Assault on the Curtain Wall of Malakoff*, *Taking the Gorge of Malakoff*, exhibited at the Paris Salon - the first in 1857, bringing him the medal of honor, and the other two in 1859. Afterwards they were on display at Versailles, in the Crimean Hall.

Also, the celebrated history painter Horace Vernet (1789-1863) (Fig. 27) was in Crimea to make sketches for future works. He painted a large canvas with *The Battle of Alma*, which has at the center of the composition Prince Napoleon Jérôme, the commander of a French division that distinguished itself in that confrontation (Fig. 28). Another work by Vernet was inspired by the battle for Malakoff Tower, entitled, after the words said by General Patrice de Mac-Mahon, *J’y suis - j’y reste!* and representing the resolute commander making a firm gesture with his hand to a British officer to show that he was determined to remain on that position, while a zouave was planting the French flag on the captured ramparts.

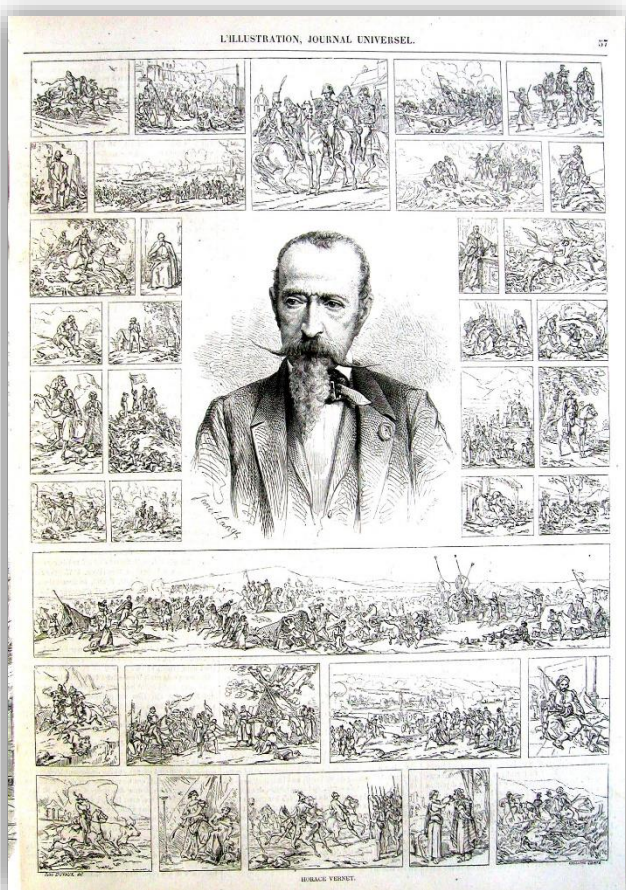


Fig. 27

The painter Jean-Charles Langlois (1789-1870), former combatant, in his youth in the Napoleonic campaigns, at Wagram and Waterloo, where he obtained the rank of colonel at the age of 26, arrived in Crimea in mid-November 1855 to document himself in order to paint a panorama. He was accompanied by the photographer Léon-Eugène Méhédin (1828-1905) who took pictures of the ruins of the fortifications before they were dismantled, the appearance of the city and the surrounding landscape that Langlois was intending to paint in his panorama *The Taking of Sevastopol*, installed in 1860 in a building specially built on the Champs-Élysées. The painting was destroyed in the Siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

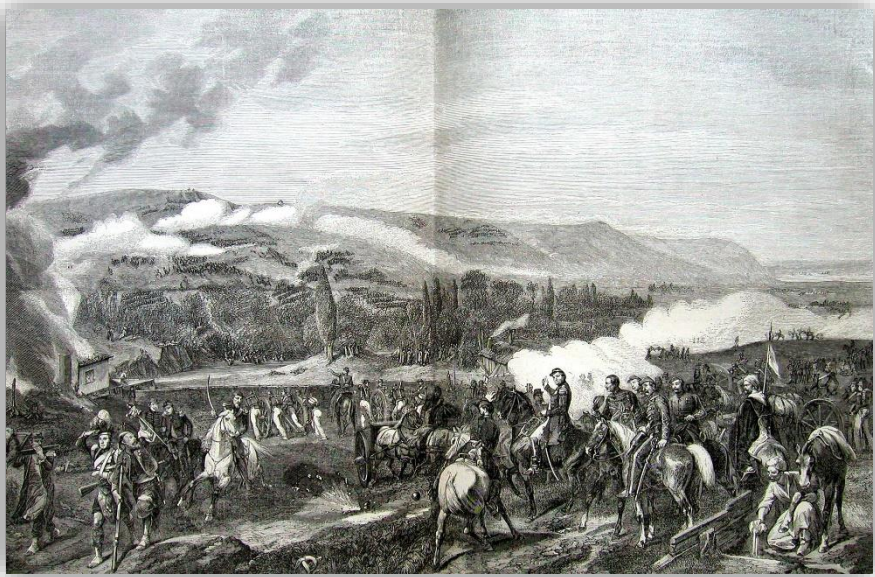


Fig. 28

Although he was not present on the theater of war due to his poor health, the painter Isidore Pils (1813-1875), made two compositions of great significance. The first, large-scale *Débarquement des Armées alliées en Crimée, 14 September 1854*, has in the foreground the French commanders, Marshal Saint-Arnaud and his generals Canrobert, Bosquet, Pelissier and Prince Napoleon Jérôme, and around the elite troops who accompanied them. The work was successfully exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1857 and the author was rewarded with a medal and decorated by Napoleon III with the Legion of Honor. The other, equally imposing painting, entitled *The Crossing of the River Alma by General Bosquet's Troops, September 20, 1854*, was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1861, and brought the author the great medal of that important artistic event. The work inspired the cartoonist Galetti who published a humorous drawing representing a charming visitor to the Salon who, in front of these large paintings, shook hand with a zouave in the painting, whom she had met, unbeknownst to her husband, in the camp at Saint-Maur (Fig. 29).

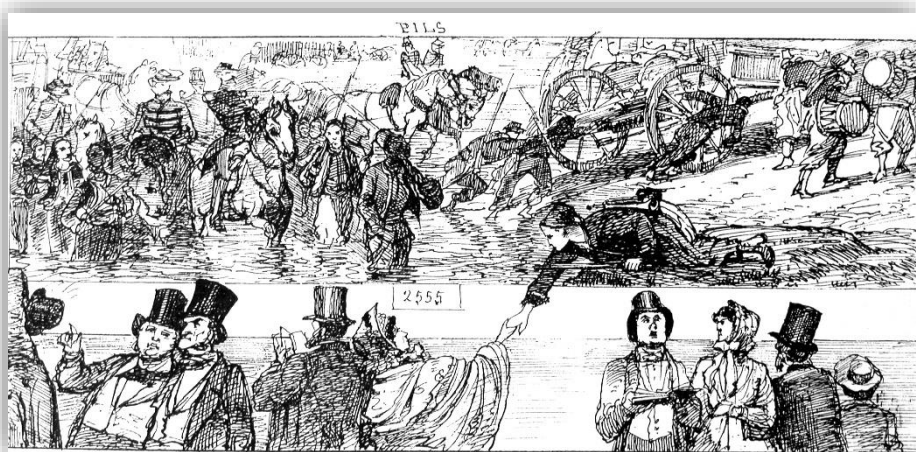


Fig. 29

In addition to a rich memoir, in addition to many historical studies, in addition to the iconography related to the battles - be it the authentic product of the documentation at the theatre of war, or the fruit of imagination - the Crimean War also provided a source of inspiration for humorists who, during the campaign or immediately after, in order to deface the faces of those directly affected by the conflict and make fun of the trouble of those who had been there, they published, in the pages of periodicals, comic stories or savory caricatures about the combatants and the strange places they crossed. The simple man, the common soldier who had no idea of politics and the reasons that had caused the war, saw only the current, palpable realities, which specifically referred to the privations of the bivouac life spent in an inhospitable land. That is why the dialogue between two zouaves, a hardened veteran and a recruit who listens, apathetically, to the old man's stories, made over a glass of wine, is revealing: "Crimea! I'll tell you in two words what it is - and you could speak as well as I do. First of all, it's not a country, understand? It is not wine! You have eight months of winter and four months of bad weather. Look! Understand?"⁴³ (Fig.30). This sums up, wonderfully, the way in which the people understood and interpreted their effort and sacrifice - largely in vain. Unfortunately, this funny drawing is unsigned.

⁴³ *L'Illustration*, No. 696 (28 June 1856), p. 425.



Fig. 30

Other drawings were made even by combatants, such as two by a French major, C. Laslandes. In one, some joyous zouaves are represented, it being known that they were great drinkers and were often under the influence of alcohol. They made all kinds of transactions, more or less honest, in order to get provisions⁴⁴: one, who has some chickens attached to a staff, supports his intoxicated comrade, who staggers on the back of a donkey, happily holding a keg in his lap, while another shakes the hand of a Scotsman with whom he had concluded a profitable business⁴⁵ (Fig. 31).



Fig. 31

⁴⁴ Robert B. Edgerton, *Pe front în Războiul Crimeii*, p. 131.

⁴⁵ *L'Illustration*, No. 674 (24 Janvier 1856), p. 58.

Another sketch, published in the same issue of *L'Illustration*, shows the humble winter quarters of a battalion commander where the lodger, shivering with cold under his tent, tries to warm himself by a camp stove, while rats scurry around unhindered (Fig. 32).

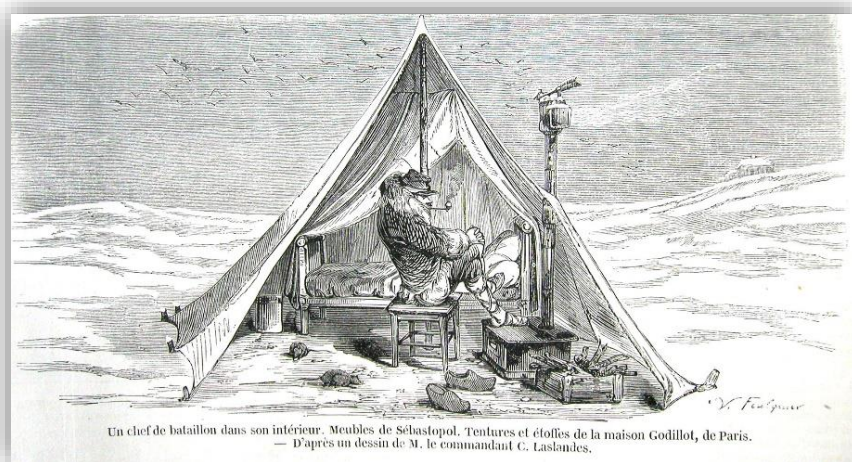


Fig. 32

In a suite of drawings are collected *Crimean Types* (*Types de Crimée*), the result of the inspired pencil of Jean-Baptiste-Henri Durand-Brager (1814-1879), special artist for *L'Illustration*: the real and the fake Turk, that is an Ottoman nizamiye and a French zouave facing each other, with great astonishment; the zouaves with plenty of gadgets attached to their knapsacks (*Zouaves avec leurs bibelots*) ; the bad luck of a cavalrymen compelled to carry his saddle, weapons and the whole equipment to spare his exhausted horse; meeting with the first Russian prisoners, huge, stout men compared with the diminutive zouaves⁴⁶ (Fig. 33). In other drawings Durand-Brager depicted the sentries sufferings under rain, snow and cold, or wounded to brought ambulance by their comrades⁴⁷ (Fig. 34) or various characters of soldiers (the enthusiastic, the dissatisfied and the carping)⁴⁸ (Fig. 35).

⁴⁶ *L'Illustration*, No. 691 (24 Mai 1856), p. 349.

⁴⁷ *L'Illustration*, No. 691 (24 Mai 1856), p. 348.

⁴⁸ *L'Illustration*, No. 691 (24 Mai 1856), p. 348.

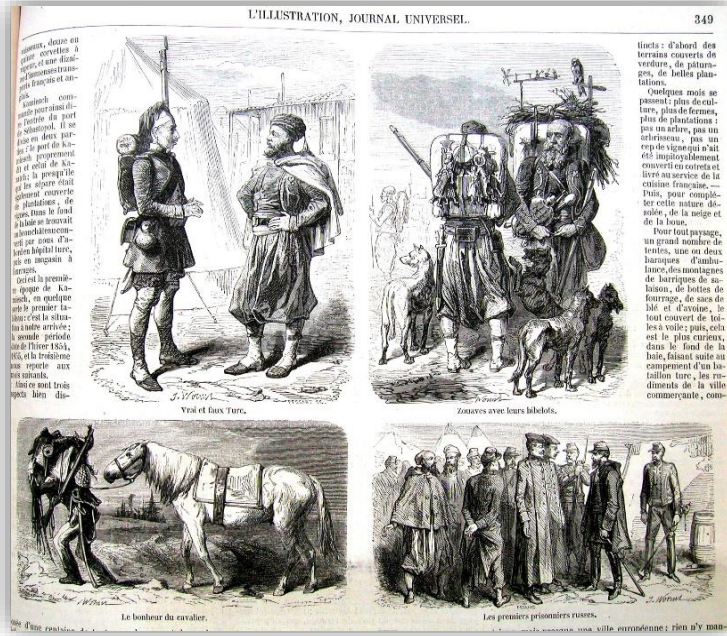


Fig. 33



Fig. 34

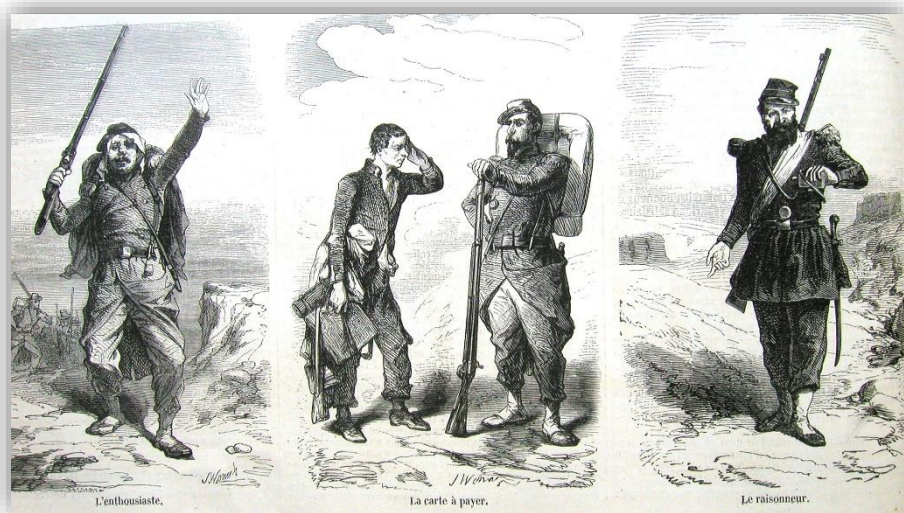


Fig. 35

The Crimean War was, until the Great War of 1914-1918, the largest armed conflict that determined European geo-politics for the next 20 years. Neither the German-Danish War of 1864 nor the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and even less the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 - although the latter created a new continental empire, the German one - did not have the scale and human losses of that of 1853-1856. And none of them produced the salutary result of re-establishing a new balance of power in Europe for the said period.

As, likewise, none of the mentioned wars created an iconography of the proportion and value of the one raised by the conflict in Crimea - manifested in various genres and techniques (from easel painting to lithography, from photography to press illustration) - which can provide a picture more telling than words and can constitute a pictorial history of its unfolding.

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THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES AND THE WAR OF CRIMEA: INTERESTS AND PERCEPTIONS ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Serban Filip CIOculeSCU*

Abstract

The long and bloody Crimean War (1853-1856) was the result of the persistent political, economic and civilisational conflicts between the two Black Sea empires: the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. While the Ottomans wanted to preserve their domination on the western flank of the Black Sea area, the Russians used the pretext of their wish to protect Orthodox Christians living in the Ottoman Empire to try to break it up and take geopolitically valuable areas: the Straits and Constantinople, which were seen as necessary possessions favoring the naval power projection towards the Mediterranean Sea and then to the world oceans. It soon became a pan-European war, perhaps anticipating the future world wars. To understand why France, Great Britain and other smaller European powers decided to come and support the Ottomans against the Russian invasion, the tools offered by the Realist and Neorealist theories of international relations may be necessary

The Romanian principalities were caught between the Ottomans and the Russians, between the need for security, for modernisation, and the aspiration to get independent and eventually unify in a single country. They were occupied by Russian forces but Russian defeat allowed them to be taken under the custody of the Western European powers, even if they formally remained under Ottoman suzerainty. France and Great Britain saw the Romanian principalities as a likely buffer area to contain any future attempt by Russia to expand itself to the west. The International Relations theory is useful to understand how great powers saw Romania's importance during those dramatic events.

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As non-sovereign entities aspiring to become sovereign and caught between the interests of opposing empires, the best option for them was to bandwagon with the Western powers and the Ottoman Empire, avoiding the scenario of being incorporated (at least Moldova) into the Russian Empire. The demilitarisation and neutralisation of the Black Sea, the transfer of Southern Bessarabia to Moldova, and the temporary absence of the Russians from the Danube mouths were the main features that allowed the Romanian entities to prepare for unification and for independence.

Keywords: Black Sea, Buffer Zone, Crimean War, International Relations, International Relations Theories, Romanian Principalities.

Introduction

The long and bloody Crimean War (1853-1856) was the result of the persistent political, economic and geopolitical conflict between the two Black Sea empires: the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, while at the same time the two biggest Western powers, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), France, plus Piedmont-Sardinia (emerging power) created a coalition against Russian expansionism and wanted to preserve the status quo.¹

While the Ottomans wanted to preserve their weakening domination on the western and southern shores of the Black Sea area, the Russians used the pretext of the need to protect all Orthodox Christians living in the Ottoman Empire (beginning with Jerusalem) to try to break it up and take geopolitically valuable areas: the Straits and Constantinople. These areas were seen as necessary possessions favoring the naval power projection towards the Mediterranean Sea and then to the world oceans and the fulfilment of what one could call “the Russo-Byzantine Empire project 2.0”. Also, the Balkans were of great importance for the Russian Tsar and the Russian nationalist and pan-Slavist movement.² But the British perceived Russia’s interests and actions in the Black Sea straits and the Caucasus as a threat to their national interests.³ “The other future

¹ John Sweetman, *The Crimean War*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001), pp. 17-21.

² Alexis Peri, “Heroes, Cowards, & Traitors: The Crimean War & its Challenge to Russian Autocracy”, (2008), https://escholarship.org/content/qt0333q36j/qt0333q36j_noSplash_93531dd2d047d19cbdc4ac015408ef35.pdf?t=krnc40, (accessed 10.10.2023).

³ British politicians began to consider Russia their main adversary and rival in the second half of the 19th century, as the competition for the control of Central Asia and the Caucasus

adversary of Russia, France, benefitted from the Ottoman sultan's *firman* from 1852 "giving the Latins (Catholics) control of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in preference to the Orthodox Greeks".⁴ This event further tensioned the relations between Paris and Petersburg. Also, Austria was worried by Russia's "occupation of Romanian states and expanding interests in the Balkans.

Using International Relations (IR), we can see this war as a typical outcome of the hegemonic rivalry in a multipolar environment, but also as a confrontation between the main world sea power (UK) and the main land (terrestrial) power (Russia).⁵ Alone, it is not sure that the UK could have defeated the large Russian armed forces, in spite of the huge economic and technological superiority of the former and the backwardness of the latter. The battlefield was on Russian territory (Black Sea, Caucasus, Baltic Sea), far away from British European territory, so one would expect to see the effects of overstretching on the British army.⁶ By aligning with France, a former great power who was on its way to regain its status, the British managed to accumulate more military, technologic and economic power than the Russians did. Confronted by a strong alliance, the Russian Empire was not able to find an ally to try to rebalance the power distribution and so faced the enemies alone and lost the war. The Austrian Empire did not want to side with Russia.⁷ Without allies, it could not avoid the effects of the economic blockade and military exhaustion.⁸

The Crimean War, in contrast with The 30 Years's War, king Louis XIV's wars for European hegemony, the Napoleonic Wars or the two

was seen as generating a risk for British-led India. The British called this rivalry spread on the continents "the Great game" and before the emergence of Wilhelm 2nd's Germany as the main rival with the perception of British decision-makers, Russia has been the arch-rival for London. It seems that the British officer Arthur Conolly first used the Great Game metaphor. See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), p. 27.

⁴ Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870. An Empire Besieged*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 438.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 437.

⁶ Jessica Brain, "Timeline of the Crimea War", <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Timeline-Crimea-War/>, (accessed 20.05.2023).

⁷ See Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, 2nd edition, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 236.

⁸ G.A. Embleton, *The Crimea War 1853-56*, (London: Almark Publishing Co, 1975), p. 23.

world wars, cannot be seen as representing the historical end of a “hegemonic cycle”.⁹ Generally, once or twice in a century great powers’ hegemony were replaced by others who changed the world order. In 1856, Russia was defeated but not eliminated for a long time from the European and world power structure – only for 22 years. The UK reconfirmed its great power status as a world sea and trading hegemon. France rose as a regional power but was defeated 14 years later by the unified and strong German state.

1. A Hegemonic War in Eastern Europe

The international order in 1853 was characterized by:

- A multipolar structure: three great powers (UK, France, and Russia) and at least 2-3 regional (middle-rank) powers (The Ottoman Empire, Austria, Prussia, Sardinia Piedmont).
- Russia was the main revisionist power, as it wanted areas under Ottoman rule and then to expand towards the Indian Ocean. Great Britain (UK) was seen as the status quo dominant economic and naval power, and France was a re-emerging great power. The Ottoman Empire was a declining status quo power.
- The forth-hegemonic cycle after the Westphalian Peace was unfolding: it had started after 1815 and ended with the beginning of World War 1.
- A fragile balance of power existed, which was restored after the defeat of Napoleon I and following the Congress of Vienna: France looked for a comeback as a great power, which irritated both UK and Austria. But if the UK and France had been willing to share the lands of the Ottoman Empire with Russia, Petersburg would have agreed and negotiated (similar to Russia nowadays proposing Poland, Romania, Hungary to share Ukraine’s territories). Emperor Nicolas I proposed the sharing of Ottoman Lands to the British (early in 1853) but with no success - before, during the summer of 1844, Nicholas I visited England, and he famously stated, “Turkey is a dying man. We may endeavor to keep him alive, but we shall

⁹ George Modelski, “Long Cycles and International Regimes, <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/15/long-cycles-and-international-regimes/>, 15 October 2012.

not succeed. He will, he must die.”¹⁰ Only some decades later, the Sykes-Picot secret agreement (1916) allowed such a sharing mechanism between Russia, UK and France at the expense of the Ottomans.

- One must mention the economic and technologic domination by the Western colonial powers (UK and France) on the backwarded Russian and Ottoman empires

- There was no international organization to limit the use of force, and no international treaties to do that, so the world order was characterized by anarchy: each state was responsible for its survival (self-help), having to choose between doing it by itself or becoming member in an alliance. Nobody called the wars illegal in the 19th century.

- This war was carried up with industrial modern technologies – train, telegraph, modern weapons (in a period, which preceded the first modern huge wave of globalisation and industrialisation between 1880-1914)

- The Holy Alliance (also called the Grand Alliance) had arrived at its end – this was a powerful coalition gathering imperial conservative great powers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia. It was created after the final defeat of Napoleonic France at the behest of Emperor (Tsar) Alexander I of Russia and signed in Paris on 26 September 1815. Russia played an important role in suppressing revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe. However, then, the Holly Alliance disappeared, as Russia and Austria harbored divergent interests in Eastern Europe. Before 1866, Austria hoped to unify the German states around itself but was also very interested in the Balkans. Russia was seen more as a threat regarding the Balkans and the claims to protect all the Christians

- The Ottoman Empire (Sublime Porte) was in an accentuated declining phasis and needed protectors otherwise it risked decomposition and becoming a victim of foreign (Russian) conquest. Russia used the pretext of the need to protect the

¹⁰ Nicholas I 1796–1855,

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191843730.001.0001/q-oro-ed5-00007879;jsessionid=DD2E5A40F90AA04C8DB837AD7BEECA66>, accessed on May 30, 2023.

Christians living on Ottoman lands to limit the sovereignty and independence of the Turkish state.¹¹

- The Russian Empire benefitted from its demographic size and from its soft power based on religion (the Tsar's appeal to come and fight on behalf of Eastern Christendom against Ottoman and Islam was followed by young men from Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria)

- France and Great Britain did not have a common strategic agenda; they simply opposed Russian expansionist movements but disagreed regarding the shape of the future world order. Before the war erupted, they did not clearly form an alliance. Consequently, they failed to deter Russia from attacking the Ottoman armed forces but strived to incite ethno-religious rebellions in the Caucasus to domestically weaken the Russian state. The destruction of the Ottoman fleet by the Russians at Sinop Bay (November 1853) was seen in both Paris and London as a moral blow and a humiliation. They decided to enter the war and support the Ottoman state.

Before 1850, Paris and London were not properly allies, they had divergences and London even sought Petersburg's support to try to limit the rise of French power. They disagreed also on Italian unification, on Romanian principalities unification. But when Russia threatened to seriously perturb the European balance of powers, France and UK aligned against it. Russia was seen in London as a threat to India and to the Middle East – owning the Turkish straits would have opened its way to the Middle East and then India.

- The Ottoman state was afraid of Russian aggressiveness and territorial claims, while the geographic proximity between the two empires and the imbalance between their military powers aggravated this perception. Thus, we can use the “balance of threat theory” (S. Walt) to explain the Turkish option to search for more remote allies against a stronger and threatening neighbour.

- Austria, the former ally of Russia (which saved it during the revolutions of 1848-1849), did not support it during the Crimean War. It declared first its neutrality and when Russia retreated from

¹¹ Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile puteri si Romania 1856-1947 (The Great Powers and Romania 1856-1947)*, (Bucharest: Albatros Publishing House, 1996).

Valacchia and Moldavia, Vienna occupied them with the Ottoman consent. At the end of the war, Vienna asked that the Russian Empire would give up the protectorate on Moldavia and Wallachia (established in 1829), and the Danube would become a freely navigable river.

2. The Main Disturbers of the Balance of Power

The state of peace in International Relations, when there are several great powers contending for lands, resources and glory, could be ensured by the so-called balance of power, a classical syntagm from the diplomacy of the 17-19th centuries which was adopted and developed by Realist and Neorealist theories in the 20th century.¹² The Westphalian Peace in the middle of the 17th century created a world of European Leviathans, which recognized each other as legitimate entities controlling territorial spaces and population, but this did not prevent some of them to dream at getting regional or even universal hegemony. The middle 19th century world order was still a European one with 3-4 great powers. The historic legacy of French emperor Napoleon the first, who tried to conquer vast lands and create a huge empire, was still very present in the heads of the Russian, Austrian, British and Ottoman rulers. They all wanted to prevent the repetition of such a terrible event but some of them secretly aspired to enlarge their states or empires.

Among the players involved in the world power and survival game, Russia was the most interested in the quick dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, first to benefit from its territories and resources, also for cultural and historical reasons - proclaiming itself the supreme ruler for the Eastern Christianity, pretending to the inheritance of the Byzantine religious and imperial tradition, Christianity vs Islam. Russian tsars since the 17th century dreamt of using religious solidarity to instigate a huge uprising of the Christians against the Ottoman Empire. There were about ten million Orthodox people in the Ottoman lands at the time of the Crimean War. Empress Catherin the Great nurtured the dream to recreate the Byzantine Empire by taking the needed lands from the Turks. But Russia's will to have control also on the Christians from the Holy Lands and eradicate Catholicism from eastern Poland and Belarus provoked the hostility of the French catholics.

¹² See T. V. Paul, James Wirtz and Michel Fortmann, (eds), *Balance of Power Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2004).

Of course, the Western powers did not agree to see the Ottoman state disappear. Such a huge increase in national power had been a real disturbance in the security architecture of Europe. UK and France calculated that if Russia took the Eastern European and Caucasian Ottoman lands, they would face a negative regional and global security architecture and decided to prevent Russian expansionism to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. They were anxious about the possibility that Russia become the hegemonic power in Europe and used the balance of power mechanism to avoid this scenario.

The Russian Empire was a reactionary force, a strong entity fighting against the revolutionary liberal and nationalist spirit in Europe, and responsible for the violent ending of the Valachian, Moldavian and Hungarian revolutions in 1848-1849. But Russia also saw itself as the main “Christian warrior” against Islam.¹³ Russian power was built around the Orthodox religious identity and the sacrality of the Emperor, and wanted to be recognized as a spiritual guide by all the Eastern Christians.¹⁴ The struggle between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was seen in Petersburg as a religious and geopolitical competition. There were three main geographic areas of competition: the Danube Delta and the Crimea peninsula plus the Black Sea coast around it, then the Straits, and also the Caucasus.

In 1815, Russia had built the Holy Alliance with Prussia and Austria and they suppressed many national liberation movements not only on Russian territory but also abroad, in Eastern Europe. That cooperative structure died after three decades and Russia remained without allies, a fact which is seen as a structural weakness in the Realist and Neorealist IR theory. The “internal balancing” (increasing the economic, military and soft power at the national level) did not compensate for the weakness of “external balancing” (the existence of allies and their relative strength).

We know that the Tsar expected Austria to align with Russia but this prediction was wrong. Vienna signed treaties of cooperation with Berlin, Paris, London and Istanbul. Obviously, Russia by itself was not

¹³ Erasmus, “Russia has always had an ambivalent relationship with Islam”, <https://www.economist.com/erasmus/2015/11/25/russia-has-always-had-an-ambivalent-relationship-with-islam>, (accessed on December 2015).

¹⁴ Julie Williams, “A Thousand Years of Russian Orthodoxy”, *History Today*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (April 1988), <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/thousand-years-russian-orthodoxy>, (accessed 10.06.2023).

able to match enough power to resist a coalition of the most technologically advanced Western powers, mastering the vital trade routes, as France and UK also had colonial realms and could bring goods, raw materials and workforce from the colonies. His counselors told the Tsar that France and UK would not ally. Their bilateral relations, a mixture of cooperation and rivalry (over centuries), could be explained by the concept of “balance of interests”. The common antipathy towards Petersburg and desire to preserve the Ottoman state explain their conjunctural alliance.

Russia was backward in the technological and scientific realm and its autocratic regime did not encourage research and innovation, nor a strong middle class and a vibrant economy. Only in 1861 did the Russian Empire abolish the agrarian serfdom and made former serfs free peasants (without giving them enough lands), a decision which affected the socio-economic structure of the country completely.

3. Keeping the Balance of Power (the Status Quo) or Ending the Ottoman State and Sharing Its Lands and Resources?

What started as another war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire soon became a larger European war, anticipating future world wars. To understand why France, Great Britain and other smaller European powers decided to come and support the Ottomans against the Russian invasion, the tools offered by the Realist and Neorealist theories of International Relations may be necessary.

Did Paris and London simply tried to keep the regional balance of power unchanged in Eastern Europe or did they wanted to crush the Russian empire, expel it from the Black Sea area and favor a strengthening of the Ottoman power?

We know that the two main victors of the Crimean War did not really trust each other and were far from having common views and aspirations regarding the emerging world order. Only their common fear of Russian military and political hegemony in the western Black Sea area and the Balkans made them build a coalition and fight against the Russian huge armed forces. The British also had strong economic and trade interests in the Black Sea and the Caucasus while the French Emperor Napoleon III hoped to push for a French sphere of interest in Eastern Europe. In 1853, he publicly demanded the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces from Moldavia and Wallachia and the refusal by Petersburg led to war.

In the end, at the Paris Peace Congress, Russia agreed to the freedom of navigation on the Danube, to the Black Sea being a neutral area (open for free trade), it gave up the protectorates of Moldavia, Wallachia and Serbia, and surrendered its territories at the mouth of the Danube River and part of Southern Bessarabia to the Moldavia.¹⁵

The victors did not give a special privilege to the Turkish state. Russia and the Ottoman state were both forbidden to keep military fleets in the Black Sea, fortifications were destroyed, and arsenals were prohibited, while the Black Sea was neutralized. The Black Sea was declared open for navigations of civilian vessels from all countries, while the navigation on the Danube was free. Without the strong Russian political and military pressure on the Ottoman Empire and with the benevolence of the European victorious powers, the Romanian principalities benefitted from more than 20 years of respite and prepared first for unification and then for independence. However, all the Russian territories lost in the war – Sevastopol, Balaklava, Kerch and Yeni-Kale – were returned to Russia by the victors. Russia was accepted as one of the collective powers, which guaranteed the administrative quasi-independence of the two Romanian principalities and was given a place within the new European Danube Commission. Thus, the Paris Peace Congress was a compromise-peace, not a kind of “diktat”, so Russia avoided total humiliation and was allowed to stay within the European family of states.

4. The Romanian Principalities as a Buffer Area between the West and Russia

The two Romanian non-independent entities became a point of contention between the Ottomans and the Russians during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Russians frequently occupied them when the Turks were defeated in successive wars. Historically speaking, the Romanian principalities (Valachia and Moldavia) were caught between the Ottomans, the Russians and also the Austrians, between the need for security, modernisation and the aspiration to obtain independence and unify into a single country. They constituted part of the Ottoman Empire, then Russian forces occupied them but Russian defeat let Austria replace the occupation

¹⁵ Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile puteri si Romania 1856-1947*, (Bucharest: Albatros Publishing House, 1996).

(1854-1857)¹⁶ and after that, they were taken under the collective custody of the seven Western European powers, even if they formally remained under Ottoman suzerainty. France and Great Britain saw the Romanian principalities as a likely buffer area to contain any future attempt by Russia to expand itself to the west. In the Realist IR theory, the two Romanian states could be seen as material assets to be exchanged between regional powers, as compensation elements, in order to restore the balance of power and avoid war.

St. Petersburg knew that France and UK did not want Russia to annex Valachia and Moldavia, because they wanted the Danube mouths not to be under Russian control. During the Crimea War, the Romanian principalities were seen as precious strategic lands (giving access to the Danube, with the Carpathian Mountains as a natural fortress, also agricultural and wood resources) whose possession would create an advantage – this is why Russian forces occupied them. It was also a tool to put pressure on the Ottoman Empire and its Western protectors, in order to recognize the Tsar’s claimed “right” to protect the Christians living under Ottoman rule.

For the French and British it was necessary to make Russia withdraw from there. The British wanted the Ottoman rule restored on the Romanian lands, while France supported the independence and unification of the two principalities to create a “satellite” new state to be used as a buffer against Russia. France was more sensitive to the principle of nationalities and wanted the Romanian nation to become a kind of sister nation (based on French strong cultural influence in Moldavia and Walachia and common Latin origin), supporting France’s geopolitical plans in central and Eastern Europe. However, nationalism is widely seen as a strong disturbing factor for the balance of power and a tool for dismembering multinational empires¹⁷, which are seen as great powers or regional powers by the Realist School of IR.

¹⁶ Historians say that Austria nurtured plans for an “Austrian Danube”, hoping to keep control of the Romanian Danubian lands. But the Paris Congress did not allow this outcome, neither let Russia to incorporate the Romanian principalities into its empire. France and Great Britain preferred a neutral union of two principalities, which received the right to control the Danube’s mouths, than to let Vienna or Petersburg control that strategic area. See A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918*, Romanian translation by Cornelia Bucur, (Bucharest: Allfa Publishing House, 2000), pp. 82-83.

¹⁷ Andreas Wimmer and Yuval Feinstein, “Nationalism’s rise to power across the world. An event history analysis of nation-state formation, 1816-2001”, <https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/savvy/sectionchs/documents/WimmerFeinstein.pdf>, (accessed 2.06.2023).

We know Austria was heavily against the existence of a new independent (Romanian) state at its south-eastern border since it had a large Romanian minority (in Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina) and feared that ethnic Romanian separatism could copy that of the Southern Slavians and constitute a threat to their empire. Also, Vienna believed that France's support for a single Romanian state was meant to make the Austrians fail to protect their interests in northern Italy, thus being a kind of mechanism to weaken Vienna's control on that part of Italy. Paris also wanted to take some Italian northern lands using its support for Piedmont Sardinia. In fact, one can think that the Austrian temporary occupation of the two Romanian states may have prevented them from turning into a "fighting area" during the Crimean War and it was also accepted by the Ottomans as a movement to limit Russia's expansionism into its territories.

As non-sovereign entities aspiring to become sovereign and caught between the interests of opposing empires, the best option for Valachia and Moldavia was to "bandwagon" with the Western powers and the Ottoman state, avoiding the scenario of being incorporated into the Russian Empire. The fate of Bessarabia, taken in 1812 by the Russian Empire was well known. Stephen Walt's "balance of threat" concept explains Romania's liberal-national elites' repugnance at Russia's geopolitical plans.¹⁸ The demilitarisation and neutralisation of the Black Sea, the transfer of Southern Bessarabia to Moldavia and the temporary absence of the Russians from the Danube mouths were the main features which allowed the Romanian states to prepare for unification and the for independence.

I repeat, France played a major role after the war. It wanted Romanian states to be unified and ruled by a king that was intended to support Paris's interests regarding the mouths of the Danube and the trade routes. Napoleon III wanted this united Romanian state to be a buffer against Russian and Austrian expansionism.

At the peace congress in Paris (1856), British PM Palmerston managed to make Russia give up Southern Bessarabia to the Ottoman ruled Moldavia, thus Russia lost 1/3 of Bessarabia and the Danube Delta. It was a huge humiliation for Petersburg but also a cruel strategic loss since it was forced to abandon the Danube's mouths and the river Danube escaped Russia's control on its last segment.

¹⁸ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring, 1985), pp. 3-43.

The Realist and Neorealist theories of IR do not have much to say about the national independence of lands that belonged to a multinational empire.¹⁹ As long as they lack sovereignty, they must obey the dominant states and are not supposed to take autonomous decisions.²⁰ These empires are seen as great powers and their power resources are both material and non-material. In the non-material pillar, the loyalty of the population is paramount, and the “centre” must provide economic benefits and protection but also satisfy identity-safeguards needs. The Ottoman Empire gradually lost control of the two Romanian quasi-states because it was seen as a hindrance on the way to their independence and fulfilment of a national dream. But the Russian Empire, the main rival of Ottomans, also failed to attract the loyalty of the Romanians, in spite of the common Orthodox Christian faith. The Romanian liberal elites saw Russia as a predator entity and a source of potential denationalisation, also an enemy of liberal and democratic values that the emerging bourgeoisie was supporting. So, no wonder that the Romanian unified state, which emerged soon after the Paris Peace Congress became a strong supporter of France, which was not an Orthodox Christian state but was more liberal and sensitive to national and independentist ideals. Paris did not aspire to incorporate Romanian lands into its territory, as Russia did. And Napoleon III remained in history as the main protector of young nations from Eastern Europe, which whom he emphasised.²¹

Conclusions

The diminishing Russian influence and the growing French influence were the main elements favoring this trend towards statehood and freedom for the Romanian states. Of course, Austria and the Ottoman empires were against the unification of the Romanian states but the

¹⁹ Paul Schroeder, “Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory”, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer, 1994), pp. 108-148.

²⁰ Colonialism also generated entities without decisional powers, which could not be seen as real players in International Relations. See Nicolas Guilhot, “Imperial Realism: Post-War IR Theory and Decolonisation”, *The International History Review*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (August 2014), pp. 698-720.

²¹ See Raoul Bossy, “Napoleon III and the Submerged Nationalities”, *The Polish Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1960), pp. 110-117.

decision was taken to create ad hoc assemblies to decide on the future organisation of the statehood. This paved the way for the future unification.

The collective powers created a special commission to review the legislation to be used in Moldova and Valacchia, to replace the Russian-drafted Organic Regulations.

In the end, the Romanian states received collective guarantees from the Western powers and Russia (certainly under Ottoman suzerainty), they escaped Russian domination for a long time and also benefitted from the freedom of commercial navigation on the Danube.

The war in Crimea opened the way for the unification and common statehood of Romanians, Italians and then Germans. These three nations managed to build their own states on a larger ethnic basis.

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BETWEEN RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND OTTOMAN EMPIRE: ROMANIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LATE 1876

Adrian-Bogdan CEOBANU*

Abstract

The beginning of a new episode of “The Eastern Question”, in 1875, put the Romanian state in a difficult situation. At that time, the Romanian government was concerned to keep out the territory of Romania from the events from the south of the Danube. The events in the Balkans escalated in April 1876 with the outbreak of the anti-Ottoman uprising in Bulgaria, and in June by starting the hostilities of Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottoman military forces. In the summer of 1876, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, drew up a long memorandum, in which he presented seven important claims of Romania to the Ottoman Empire, which he sent the next day to diplomatic agents abroad. In the new context, in the fall of 1876, the Romanian authorities explored a possible collaboration with Russia. On 26 September 1876, Prime Minister I.C. Brătianu went to Crimea to establish an agreement regarding the passage of Russian armies through Romanian territory at the south of the Danube. On the other hand, in November 1876, Ali-Bey, the Governor of Tulcea, was sent on a secret mission to the Romanian capital. Under these conditions, in the present text, we will try to answer a few questions: how did Romania’s foreign policy evolve towards the end of 1876? How were the missions of Brătianu in Livadia and that of Ali-Bey in Bucharest perceived? And last but not least, how did the two great powers, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, position themselves towards Romania?

Keywords: Balkans, Eastern Question, Ottoman Empire, Romania, Romanian foreign policy, Russian Empire.

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Romania, Russia and Ottoman Empire

At the time of the outbreak of the Eastern Crisis and in the first stage of its development, Romanian-Russian relations were on an upward trend: in 1869, Prince Carol I met Tsar Alexander II in Livadia, and five years later the Romanian diplomatic agency was established in Petersburg, and in March 1876 the commercial convention was signed.¹ Russia was one of the guarantor powers, given our legal status: the collective guarantee of the six Great Powers and the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, so that every gesture of the Romanian authorities was analyzed not only by the Russian cabinet, but also by the European governments.² However, the Romanian political environment, dominated by feeling of mistrust in Russian actions, many of the politicians of the time gave speeches from the Parliament tribune against the Empire from the East. For example, in 1871, Titu Maiorescu claimed that the war of Russian Orthodoxy against Islam foretold its imminent outbreak, and Russia sought to erase the “humiliation” to which it had been subjected in 1856, when the counties from south of Bessarabia (Bolgrad, Ismail and Cahul) had been placed under the administration of Moldavia.³

On the other hand, Romanian-Ottoman relations were increasingly tense after 1866. Several events contributed to this situation, as, after the arrival of Carol I in the country, was negotiated in Constantinople the right to mint money, the consecration of the title of Romania, according to the Romanian Constitution of 1866 and the abolition of consular jurisdiction without any positive answer from the Ottoman side. At the same time, after 1866, Ottoman diplomacy protested against the opening of Romanian agencies in Rome (1873) and Petersburg (1874); as well as the signing of the Romanian-Austro-Hungarian commercial convention in 1875; the rumors coming from Bucharest regarding a possible proclamation of independence through diplomatic channels displeased the Ottoman Empire, and the speeches in the Romanian Parliament, according to which

¹ For more details about the Romanian-Russian Relations after 1866 see Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des relations russo-roumaines*, (Iași: Editura Neamul Românesc, 1917); Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the formation of the Romanian national state 1821-1878*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

² Gheorghe Cliveti, *România și puterile garante 1856-1878*, second edition, (Iași: Editura Junimea, 2020), p. 674.

³ Titu Maiorescu, *Discursuri parlamentare cu privire asupra dezvoltării politice sub domnia lui Carol*, Vol. I (1866-1876), (București: Editura Librăriei Socec & Comp, 1897), p. 36.

Romania's situation was no longer compatible with that of a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, annoyed Sublime Porte.⁴

Internally, on July 24, 1876, a new government led by I. C. Brătianu was formed. In the speech held in the Parliament, the Prime Minister pointed out the strategy of the Romanian cabinet in terms of foreign policy, arguing that the most appropriate would be “a strict neutrality maintained by watching over public security and borders”.⁵ In the new government was also co-opted N. Ionescu, as foreign minister, a clear follower of neutrality, and who asked, on September 11, to Emil Ghica, the representative of the Romanian agency in Saint Petersburg, to convey to the Russian decision-makers the impossibility of Romania to pronounce, at that moment, regarding his attitude in the event of a war declared by the Russian Empire.



Prince Carol I, 1877
(author's collection)

Visit to Livadia (September 1876)

However, in the fall of 1876, the authorities from Bucharest were exploring a possible collaboration with Russia. The first important moment was the visit of I.C. Brătianu at Livadia, at the end of September 1876, accompanied by General Slăniceanu, Minister of War, Teodor Văcărescu, the Marshal of the Court, and Singurov, princely aide-de-camp and interpreter for the Russian language. From the very beginning is noticeable

⁴ G. G. Florescu, *Înființarea reprezentanțelor diplomatice ale României la Constantinopol*, in Vol. *Reprezentanțele diplomatice ale României*, coord. Gh. Cazan, Vol. I, 1859-1917, (București: Editura Politică, 1967), p. 63-100. In Romanian historiography, are not many books or publications about the Romanian-Ottoman relations in the period 1866-1914. See the most recent publication: Silvana Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat. Relații otomano-române între anii 1878-1908*, (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, 2018), p. 295.

⁵ *Documente privind istoria României. Războiul pentru independență*, volumul I/2: Evenimentele militare premergătoare anului 1877, (București: Editura Academiei, 1954), p. 341.

the absence of N. Ionescu, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Romanian delegation met with Tsar Alexander II, A.M. Gorceakov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, D.A. Miliutin, the Russian Minister of War and Pavel Ignatiev, the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, specially called from the capital of the Ottoman Empire. The visit generated discussions in both the Romanian and foreign political environment, causing, later, various interpretations.

Romanian Interpretation

One aspect must be mentioned from the very beginning. There is not yet, a text written by I. C. Brătianu or another member of the Romanian delegation. Thus, the “base” for the analysis, from the Romanian perspective, of what was discussed at Livadia, remained, a brief note by Prince Carol about the discussion he had with Brătianu, immediately after his return to Romania, on October 4. We find this note in King Carol’s memoirs, published at the beginning of the 20th century, during his life. According to them, the head of the government made it clear that, for Emperor Alexander, the war against the Ottoman Empire was “inevitable”, while Ignatiev brought up the need for an “agreement” for the passage of Russian armies through Romania. Brătianu also discussed it separately with Gorceakov. The Russian minister emphasized “that Russia had to conclude a military convention with Romania, without any political character”. On the other hand, Brătianu replied that a Romanian-Russian understanding could be reached, if the Russian Empire entered the war with the consent of the Guarantor Powers. The discussions went further, Gorceakov bringing up the fact that “Romania had to unconditionally allow the passage of Russian troops on its territory, otherwise, Russia will refer to the treaties according to which Moldova and Wallachia were an integral part of Turkish territory and will advance without any consideration.” At such a moment, Brătianu replied that “the war that Russia will carry for the liberation of the Christian brothers from the Turkish domination will not be a happy one, if she starts it by crushing a Christian army.” Finally, the liberal leader had his own assessment of the situation: at the Tsar’s court there were “two currents, one for the war and an other more peaceful.” On leaving, Gorceakov told him that, “if there is to be a war”, there will be a Russian-Romanian “understanding”; Brătianu

would have committed “to discuss the matter more closely”.⁶ Therefore, from the Romanian perspective, the problem of southern Bessarabia or other aspects related to the position and legal status of the Romanian state were not discussed at Livadia, but only the possibility of agreeing to the passage of Russian troops into Romanian territory, without Russia assuming any commitment political.

In addition to the notes left by Carol I and published during his lifetime, some Romanian historians occasionally invoke the memories of Ion Bălăceanu, who in 1876 was Romania’s diplomatic agent in Vienna. Bălăceanu wrote his memoirs towards the end of his life - he died in 1914 - so one can assume that he read the notes of King Carol I. His memoirs were written in French and remained in manuscript, in the Romanian archives. Only at the beginning of the 2000s, they were translated into Romanian. The Romanian diplomat wrote that, at one point, Brătianu told him about the meeting in Livadia where the Romanian prime minister had a separate discussion with Tsar Alexandru the second, at a cigarette and coffee, in the presence of Tsarina Maria Alexandrovna. In the discussions between the two, the Bessarabian problem was also brought up. The Russian monarch would have mentioned that the “territory is not important because Russia has enough; is a matter of principle; For the first time since its existence, Russia had been forced to give up, even if it was only a fragment of a territory it had conquered by arms”; reference to the events of the Congress of Paris in 1856, when Russia had to cede the three counties (Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad) to Moldova. Thus, Alexander II considered it a duty to his father to recover the three counties; therefore, another aspect would have been discussed at Livadia, that of southern Bessarabia.⁷

Foreign Interpretation

The visit of Ion C. Brătianu to Livadia led to the appearance of several comments and interpretations from the agents and consuls accredited in Romania. For example, the Italian consul Fava noted that in a discussion with Nicolae Ionescu, he emphasized the natural intention of Prime Minister Brătianu “to greet the Tsar” at Livadia, to whom he was

⁶ *Memoriile regelui Carol I de un martor ocular*, Vol. VIII, (București: Editura Tipografiei Ziarului “Universul”, 1909), p. 83-85.

⁷ Ion Bălăceanu, *Amintiri politice și diplomatice 1848-1903*, ed. Georgeta Filitti, (București: Editura Cavaliotti, 2002), p. 201-202.

also handed “a personal letter, addressed by Prince Carol”.⁸ Nicolae Ionescu also brought up the fact that Brătianu had greeted the Emperor of Austria-Hungary a short time before, in Sibiu. The Romanian official insisted on the fact that the visit from Liviadia did not mean “a change, in the Slavic sense, of the Romanian foreign policy”. Romania continued to remain “neutral and peaceful (...) the Livadia mission not hiding alliance projects.”⁹

Based on the information gathered from the Romanian political environment, the British consul Mansfield reported to the Foreign Office that Brătianu, during the visit, “would not have referred to anything related to politics”; Emperor Alexander would, however, have asked “the question why Romania did not participate in the Serbian movement”, and the Grand Duke Heir “discussed” with Colonel Slăniceanu about “the organization of the Romanian army.” When Brătianu left, Ignatiev would have told him that “vous savez que la Roumanie a toujours été l’enfant gâté de la Russie.”¹⁰ The British consul also discussed, together with his French colleague, with the Prime Minister of Romania. In the discussions with them, Brătianu insisted on the idea that his compatriots “were fully determined, at any risk and with everything in their power, to resist and reject any armed violation of the Romanian border: “...if we are beaten or even swallowed, in any case, Europe will respect us, a small people who succumbed in the struggle for its individuality.”¹¹ At the end of December 1876, the British consul had talks with Dimitrie Sturdza and Ion Ghica. They told him a part of the dialogue held between Brătianu and Gorceakov; the latter told him that “if you do not go with us you must be crushed”, and Brătianu replied: “you may crush us, but you will esteem us.”¹² Also, the Belgian consul in Bucharest carefully followed the events in Romania in the fall of 1876. He was more straightforward in a report sent to Brussels: “No one doubts that it is about obtaining, in exchange for total adherence

⁸ *Independența României. Documente*, Vol. II, Part I (*Corespondență diplomatică străină 1853-1877 mai*), ed. Ielița Gămulescu et al., (București: Editura Academiei, 1977), p. 188-193.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

¹⁰ Sorin Liviu Damean, *Diplomați englezi în România 1866-1880*, Vol. I, (Craiova: Editura Universitaria, 2012), p. 255.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 255-256.

¹² National Archives, Foreign Office, 28/2484, f. 344.

to Moscow policy, guarantees for the maintenance of even Romania's independence."¹³

We observe, therefore, from the diplomats accredited in Bucharest different points of view influenced, most likely, by the discussions held in the political circles in the capital of Romania.

Russian Interpretation

And what was the Russian interpretation of the Livadia meeting? What records are left from their part, whether we are talking about memoirs, diplomatic reports or private correspondence? For this, we have several sources at hand. Among those who were in Livadia in the fall of 1876, we also find the diplomat Jomini, Gorceakov's secretary, whose private correspondence with N.K. Giers, who was in Petersburg, was published several decades ago. According to the Russian diplomat, "Romanians are very nice. They offer to be our vanguard in exchange for a few compensations: independence, royalty and the annexation of Dobrogea to Constanța."¹⁴ Also, according to Ignatiev's testimony, Brătianu asked Gorceakov if Russia wanted to recover the three counties in the south of Bessarabia. The Russian official replied that he would like his answer to be guessed. The Romanian Prime Minister also discussed with Ambassador Ignatiev various aspects, including that of southern Bessarabia. The Russian diplomat tried to find out why Bessarabia was so important to Romania, and the liberal leader's answer was eloquent: Romania needed borders to defend itself, while Russia did not have to worry about being invaded by Romania.¹⁵ For Aleksandr I. Nelidov, one of those involved in the Romanian-Russian negotiations in the fall of 1876, whose memoirs were published at the beginning of the 20th century, it was clear that Brătianu knew that Tsar Alexander II wanted to recover the three southern counties.¹⁶

¹³ Arhivele Naționale ale României, *Independența României în conștiința europeană*, ed. Corneliu Mihail Lungu, Tudor Bucur, Ioana Alexandra Negreanu, (București, 1997), p. 180-182.

¹⁴ *Russia in the East, 1876-1880. The Russo-Turkish War and the Kuldja Crisis as seen through the letters of A.G.Jomini to N.K.Giers*, ed. Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, (Leiden: Brill, 1959), p. 30.

¹⁵ For more details, see N.P. Ignatiev, Zapiski in *Istoriceski Vestnik*, CXXXVII, 1914.

¹⁶ A.I. Nelidov, *Souvenirs d'avant et d'après la guerre de 1877-1878*, in "Revue des deux mondes", t. LXXXV, p. 244-255.



**Tsar Alexander II (Romanian
National Archives)**

In a report dated 11/23 October 1876, of the Russian diplomatic agent in Bucharest, Baron Stuart, to Gorceakov, he noted that the Romanian delegation was very satisfied with the “kind and brilliant reception” that was given to them. Regarding to the purpose of the visit, the Russian diplomat noted that “nothing was revealed about the political aspect of the delegation’s mandate.” What’s more, although he met both Brătianu and Prince Carol, they did not discuss details about the visit to Livadia.¹⁷ Five months later, in a report dated March 2/14, 1877 sent by Stuart to Gorceakov, he related that Brătianu confessed to him, saying that the trip to Livadia had fully convinced him that Bessarabia was lost for Romania and

that Russia would not miss the opportunity to get back that small piece of land, so necessary for it, at the first opportunity.” At the end of the report, the Russian diplomat concluded that “the Romanian government was ready to give up Bessarabia, but secretly there is hope that it will receive compensation from Russia if it will have to cede part of its territory.”¹⁸ We observe, therefore, from the Russian perspective different aspects of the Livadia meeting. In addition to the issue of the passage of Russian troops into Romania’s territory, other issues were also brought up: the issue of southern Bessarabia, the issue of compensation, the issue of Romania’s independence and even royalty.

Ottoman Interpretation

And what was the Ottoman interpretation of the visit to Livadia? According to a report sent from Turnu Severin by Philoxenidé Effendi on October 18, Brătianu had received full powers to conclude an offensive and defensive alliance treaty with Russia, the Romanian army came under

¹⁷ *Independența României...*, p. 197-201.

¹⁸ V. N. Vinogradov, M. D. Ereshchenko, L. E. Semeonova, T. A. Pokivailova, *Bessarabiia na perekrestke evropiskoi diplomatii. Dokumenty i materialy*, (Moskva: Indrik, 1996), p. 144.

the supreme command of Russia and reorganized by Russian officers; also, Romania would have ceded to Russia the three counties in the south of Bessarabia and would have received Bucovina and a good part of Transylvania.¹⁹ Information about the presence of the Romanian delegation in Livadia was also transmitted from Vienna, where the Ottoman ambassador Aleko Pasha found out that Romania had not yet ordered the mobilization of the army.²⁰



Abdulhamid II, 1867, Balmoral Castle²¹

Ali Bey's Mission to Bucharest

Not only the Russian Empire was interested in an agreement with Romania, but also the Ottoman Empire. In this sense, Ali Bey, the governor of Tulcea, was sent to Bucharest. About this mission, “stillborn” in the opinion of Professor Gheorghe Cliveti²², there are even fewer testimonies. In his memoirs, on November 16/28, 1876, Prince Carol noted that Ali Bey had arrived in the capital of Romania to establish an agreement with Romania, against Russia. The moment coincides with the arrival in Romania of the Russian diplomat Nelidov, who came to negotiate with the Romanian government a possible participation of Romania in an action against Turkey. Prince Carol did not meet with them and together with Brătianu decided “to keep in reserve towards both sides, relying on the Paris Convention.”²³

Perhaps not coincidentally, the best informed about Ali Bey's mission in Bucharest was the British consul. In several reports, he tried to

¹⁹ *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on “The Eastern Question”. The Balkan Crisis, part II (From the war with Serbia and Montenegro to the dissolution of the Constantinople Conference July 1876-January 1877)*, ed. Sinan Kunalalp, Gül Tokay, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2013), p. 326.

²⁰ *Ibidem, The Balkan Crisis*, p. 333-334.

²¹ Merve Köksal, *Meraklı Bir Sultanın Portresi: II. Abdülhamid'in Tablo Koleksiyonu* (<https://www.oiist.org/tr/merakli-bir-sultanin-portresi-ii-abduelhamidin-tablo-koleksiyonu/>)

²² Gheorghe Cliveti, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

²³ *Memoriile regelui Carol I de un martor ocular*, Vol. IX, (București: Editura Tipografiei Ziarului “Universul”, 1909), p. 5-6.

understand the mission of the governor of Tulcea. In this matter, he discussed with the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Ionescu, who told him that “was provided with a letter from the Grand Vizier, and had said, that he came under direct instructions from the latter, and without the knowledge of Safvet Pasha and the rest of the Divan. Now, to the vassal states, the communications are, as Your Lordship is aware, invariably made by the Grand Vizier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Porte has nothing to say to the vassal states, and the communications were therefore perfectly in order, and I do not believe that Ali Bey stated that his mission is unknown to the Divan (...) M. Ionescu informed me, that his Government had replied to Ali Bey that his communications were officious, that they must have something more definitive and official, and that through Safvet Pasha, which Your Lordship will perceive is a fresh attempt on the part of the Romanian Government to have regular diplomatic relations with the Porte.”²⁴ Therefore, the Romanians raised the stakes in the relationship with the Ottoman Empire, an aspect that was not accepted by the government in Constantinople.

Instead of conclusions

In late 1876, the decision to collaborate with Russia was made. Different interpretations remain regarding the issue of southern Bessarabia – in what measure it was known exactly in Bucharest about the intentions of the Russian Empire to recover the three counties; action materialized, at the end of the war, by the decisions taken during the Berlin Congress in the summer of 1878. On the other hand, the Russian diplomacy was more active regarding Romania than that of the ottoman diplomacy. Further research in Turkish archives may reveal new information about the objectives of Aly Bey’s mission, which until now has been interpreted rather as a failure.

²⁴ National Archives, Foreign Office 28/2484, f. 337; see and *Independența României...*, p. 226-229.

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THE MILITARY APPROACH TO ROMANIAN-OTTOMAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (1878-1916)

Silvana RACHIERU*

Abstract

Romania and the Ottoman Empire established official diplomatic relations after the international recognition of Romania's independence. Once the minister's plenipotentiary were sent to both capital cities, negotiations for different treaties and conventions were opened. They focused on the situation of the Ottoman prisoners in Romania after the end of the Russian-Ottoman War, on commercial relations and consular agreement. The main interest of Romania out of these three directions was provided by the new possibility to open toward the Ottoman market and negotiations and conclusions over the decades demonstrate once again in which direction the Romanian interest was targeted. On the other side, the Ottoman state was looking for a strategic partner in the region, understanding Romania's interest to position itself as an important player in the decision-making map in the Balkans. The paper will focus on the military aspects, which shaped this relationship, from the interest of the Ottoman Empire to have a permanent military representative in the country through military attachés in Bucharest, to its effort to determine the conclusion of a military convention with the newly independent state, in a comparative perspective to the Romanian investment in this direction.

Keywords: 1877-1878 War, Balkans, Military Diplomacy, Ottoman Empire, Ottoman War Prisoners, Romania.

The Ottoman Empire was among the first to officially recognize the new juridical status. Once the ministers plenipotentiary were sent to both capital cities in October 1878, negotiations for different treaties and conventions were opened¹ and focused primarily on the situation of the

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Ottoman prisoners in Romania after the conclusion of the Russian-Ottoman War, commercial relations and consular agreement. The main interest of Romania out of these three directions was to identify new possibilities to enter the Ottoman market. Negotiations and regular conclusions of the commercial convention over the decades demonstrated once again in which direction the Romanian interest was. On the other side, the Ottoman state was looking for a strategic partner in the region, understanding Romania's ambition to position itself as an important player on the decision-making map in the Balkans. Among various perspectives that were opened in the post-independence era, the present article focuses on some of the military aspects that shaped this relation. From the interest of the Ottoman Empire to have a permanent military representative in the country through military attachés in Bucharest, to its effort to determine the conclusion of a military convention with the newly independent state, with a focus on a specific moment which would mixed diplomacy and military interests of the Ottomans, the article is an overview of these decades of diplomatic relation the using military approach, as visible in diplomatic correspondence from the period.

The first decade of diplomatic relations between the two states was marked by the challenge of approaching a new chapter in their common history. To resume in one expression, Romania and the Ottoman Empire went from *foes to friends* and the Ottomans were trying to convince them to become allies as well. For centuries, Moldavia and Walachia, as tributary states of the Ottoman Empire, had to follow the suzerain foreign policy, resumed in the famous formula "*friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies* / tr. *Dostuna dost ve düşmanına düşmandır.*"² Ottoman – Russian War of 1877-78 changed this tradition and transformed the two into foes. The first diplomats in the autumn of 1878 were responsible for the transition towards friends and worked for the establishment and consolidation of a long-term relation.

¹ For details on the establishment of diplomatic relations, see Silvana Rachieru, *Relații româno-otomane între anii 1878-1908: diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat*, (Iași: Editura Universității Al. I. Cuza, 2018).

² As an example, the formula appears in a telhis/report dated 25 September 1603 sent by Grand Vizier Yeşminci Hasan Paşa to Sultan Mehmed III in this form: "from the old times, princes of Moldavia and Wallachia are friends of the friends and enemies of the enemies of the Great State", doc. 11 in Tahsin Gemil, *Relațiile Țărilor Române cu Poarta otomană în documente turcești (1601–1712)*, Vol. 1, (București, 1984), p. 91-92.

Until Romania's independence, any representative of the sultan in Principalities was perceived as a representative of the conqueror, the suzerain, in accordance with the political realities of the moment. While Romanian Principalities were under Ottoman suzerainty, the sultan's envoys resided only temporarily at north of the Danube, usually sent with specific missions in different crisis situations. Romanian diplomatic agents in Constantinople, which were active between 1859 to 1877, had no Ottoman equivalent in the Principality, as, in the Ottoman perspective, bilateral diplomatic relations were not possible as long as the status of legal dependency was the reflection of the political realities of the time. For Romanian society, the presence of an Ottoman diplomat who arrived for peaceful purposes and, at the same time, permanent resident was a new situation in the autumn of 1878, which required time for accommodation and acceptance. Therefore, the first representative of the sultan in Bucharest, Suleyman Samit Bey, had also the difficult mission of conquering local society and creating a positive image of the *good Ottoman*, who had to fade away the traditional and stereotypical vision of the *bad Turk*, besides his diplomatic obligations that were imposed upon the opening of such a diplomatic mission.³

The period up to the First World War can be divided from this perspective into several phases:

- The transition period *from vassalship to equality* May 1877-summer 1878;
- Official establishment of diplomatic relations – autumn 1878
- Development of consular relations 1878 – 1906
- Conclusion of diplomatic conventions 1878-1907

While the transition period was designed by the development of the war, after the Ottoman diplomatic was established, the next step was the adoption of different conventions that would facilitate the activities on both sides. When the guns fell silent, it was the turn of the diplomats to make their voices heard. Thus, in the following four decades after independence, Romania signed, renewed or only long negotiated

³ This transition was discussed in details in the article S. Rachieru, *De la "Turcul cel Rău" la "Ottomanul cel Bun": reprezentanții diplomați ai sultanului și integrarea lor în înalta societate a Vechiului Regat* in Claudiu-Lucian Topor, Alexandru Istrate, Daniel Cain (eds.), *Diplomați, societate și mondenități. Sfârșit de "Belle Époque" în lumea românească*, (Iași, 2015), p. 425-437.

conventions with its former suzerain.⁴ *Convention for the repatriation of war prisoners* (December 1878), *Commercial treaty* (1887, 1897, 1901, 1907) and the special case of negotiations for *Consular agreement*, several times postponed due to different reasons. It was only signed in 1918⁵, after several meetings took place and different versions of the project were written, but failed to be finalized (1886, 1906, 1907). The main reasons were the Romanian state's resistance to pay compensations to the Ottoman state for the land properties in recently annexed Dobrudja, as well as the existence of the convenient system of capitulations applied to European states, which covered both the situation of Romanian diplomats and colony in the Ottoman Empire. Also, a project of military convention was discussed starting in 1897, in the context of the conflict with Greece later in the context of the Bulgarian crises, 1908-1910, as an initiative of the Ottoman Empire, which did not attract supporters on the Romanian side, as is mentioned in the following pages.

In the bilateral relation, in the phases mentioned before, the military perspective could be identified in several instants. The first important one, which was a direct consequence of the Russian-Ottoman war, is *Convention for the repatriation of Ottoman prisoners of war (1878)*.⁶

The first aspect that was resolved after the recognition of the independence of Romania and concluded after the arrival in Bucharest of the first representative of the sultan is that of the Ottoman prisoners of war on Romanian territory. In the Ottoman archives (BOA) an entire folder is dedicated to the correspondence between the two sides on the subject, BOA, HR.SYS, 1060/4, which includes 170 files and covers the period

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the conventions see S. Rachieru, chapter 4 "Conventii între Imperiul Otoman și România" ["Convention between the Ottoman Empire and Romania"] in *Diplomati și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat. Relații otomano-române 1878-1908* [Ottoman Diplomats and Subjects in the Old Kingdom. Ottoman-Romanian Relations 1878-1908], (Iasi, 2018), p. 143-168.

⁵ For the text of the convention see Sinan Kunalalp, *Recueil des traités, conventions, protocoles, arrangements et déclarations signés entre l'Empire Ottoman et les puissances étrangères 1903-1922*, Vol. 2, (Istanbul : The Isis Press, 2000), p. 445-457.

⁶ For details see S. Rachieru, subchapter 4.1 "Convenția pentru repatrierea prizonierilor otomani de război (1878)" ["Convention for the repatriation of Ottoman prisoners of war (1878)"] in *Diplomati și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat. Relații otomano-române 1878-1908* [Ottoman Diplomats and Subjects in the Old Kingdom. Ottoman-Romanian Relations 1878-1908], (Iasi, 2018), p. 143-146.

1878-1886. It mainly contains the debates related to the signing of the convention regarding the fate of prisoners of war. The equivalent of this file in the Romanian archives is to be found in the Archives of the Ministry of External Affairs (AMAE), Constantinople fund. *Policies / The war of independence*, volume 33, over the same eight-year interval.⁷

According to the sources, at the end of the war there were approximately 6000 Ottoman prisoners in Romania, who were to be repatriated in various stages. Naim Ürkmez, in a recent article, mentions 10000 in total, and also that after the battle of Pleven 4000 were able to walk to Bucharest in very difficult conditions, a convoy which had a great impact on public opinion and artists. In a very expressive painting, the red fez of the Ottoman prisoners can be easily identified in Nicolae Grigorescu's work (fig. 1).⁸



Fig. 1: Nicolae Grigorescu, *Convoy of Turkish prisoners*, oil on canvas. Art Museum Braşov⁹

⁷A recent article analyses in detail the problem of Ottoman prisoners, Naim Ürkmez, *Savaşın Öteki Yüzü: Romanya'daki 93 Harbi Esirleri / Other Face of the War: Prisoners of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 in Romania* in "Belleterin", Vol. 84, Noç 300 (August 2020); p. 789-824. As the author mentions, "the study depicts the conditions of the prisoners who were sent to Bucharest and how they continued to live on in exile. This study, which is rather human-centered than political history, portrays the consequences of the war and sufferings caused by the war from the eyes of the exiled soldiers", p. 790.

⁸ Naim Ürkmez, *Savaşın Öteki Yüzü*, p. 793-4. He also provides visuals from Bulgarian artists and publications of the time, along with the paintings of Nicolae Grigorescu.

⁹ <https://evenimentemuzeale.ro/eveniment-cultural/exponatul-lunii-mai-2023-la-muzeul-de-arta-brasov-nicolae-grigorescu-1838-1907-convoi-de-prizonieri-turci/>, (accessed 17.06.2023).

The sultan's representative to the negotiations was Azaryan Efendi, who, in April 1878, was sent to Bucharest to join forces with Brigadier General Suleyman Pasha for the repatriation of prisoners¹⁰. Upon his arrival in Bucharest in April 1878 Azaryan Efendi asked for support of the Romanian government for a quick solution to the problem. In response, a joint Romanian-Ottoman commission was organized whose role was to lead to the signing of a convention. As expected, none of the parts was against the necessity of returning the prisoners to the Empire. The debates were actually related to financial problems. The amount that Romanian representatives requested as equivalent to cover the expenses for the care of prisoners was not likely to satisfy the Ottoman representatives. After the third meeting of this commission, Azaryan Efendi and Suleyman Pasha sent an urgent telegram announcing that the Romanian delegates objected to the method of payment of the maintenance costs and requested concrete instructions from the Sublime Porte. The balance of forces in this situation was modified in favour of the Romanian side, which owned the element of negotiation, the prisoners. Moreover, the Romanian representatives threatened that they would stop the convoy that was going to leave Galatz that evening, until the clarification of the situation.¹¹

It should not be ignored that these first negotiations were taking place following the conclusion of the Treaty of San Stefano, which did not satisfy the Romanian government's expectations. According to estimates made by Azaryan Efendi at the beginning of June, the payment amount from the Ottoman state was around 1,200,000 francs. At that time, after two months from the beginning of the negotiations, there were still 1500 prisoners in Romania.¹² On 9 December 1878, there were still 900 prisoners left on Romanian territory.¹³ Half were about to leave in a few days, as for the rest, it was hoped that the convention would be ratified by December 20 and they could be repatriated immediately.

The convention was ratified on December 5 1878¹⁴, the prisoners were repatriated in instalments and the Empire assumed the obligation to

¹⁰ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 1060/4/10, 04.04.1878, Constantinople

¹¹ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 1060/4/15 telegram, 19.04.1878, Bucharest.

¹² BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 1060/4/32, 02.06.1878, Bucharest.

¹³ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 1060/4/76, 09.12.1878, Bucharest.

¹⁴ The entire text is available in *Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire Ottoman* | *traités, conventions, arrangements, déclarations, protocoles, procès-verbaux, firmans, bérats, lettres patentes et autres documents relatifs au droit public extérieur de*

pay the maintenance costs spent by the Romanian state. At least in appearance, because, a few months later, the solution found by Ottoman financiers was to equate these expenses with the unpaid tribute of Romania from May 10, 1877 (proclamation of Independence) until July 13 1878 (recognition of independence according to the Treaty of Berlin). This financial artifice, categorically not approved by the Romanian side, represented the Ottoman solution. The Romanian state also insisted for this debt to be paid but, as is known, the payment has not been made. Beyond the financial and military aspects of the issue, the social perspective of the problematic should not be ignored. Behind all these discussions, there were simple people, subjects of the sultan. Files include petitions of the prisoners' families who requested their urgent repatriation, especially in the context of the coming winter.¹⁵

There are requests to find various Ottoman subjects, with the only information that they had been prisoners after Pleven. News about them varied, families learning that they were in hospitals in Bucharest or other cities near the Danube, like Giurgiu and Turnu Magurele (both former Ottoman kazas). Sometimes the situation was more tragic because subjects died in Romania and as a result, complicated succession issues had to be clarified. There was also the category of prisoners who chose to stay in Romania. Hence, in the case of the prisoners of war, we encounter the social side of the problem, rarely mentioned in historiography. This perspective determines, even three years after these negotiations, the request sent by the Ottoman Ministry of War to the Romanian government for "the detailed account of Ottoman prisoners of war who remained or died in Romania and those who returned to their country."¹⁶ In conclusion, the first aspect that involved both militaries and diplomats ended in the favour of the Ottoman part from the financial perspective, but the most important was the interest to repatriate in good conditions former soldiers who ended up under the general label of "Turkish prisoners".

la Turquie/crecueillis et publ. par Gabriel Noradounghian, tome IV 1878-1902, Constantinople, 1903.

¹⁵ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 1060/4/111-120, 146.

¹⁶ BOA, *HR.SYS.*, 1060/4/148, 63730/121, 13.09. 1881.

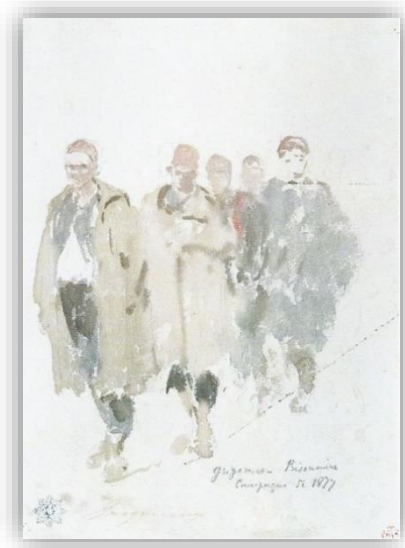


Fig. 2: Nicolae Grigorescu, *Turkish prisoners*¹⁷

The second aspect has more a symbolic value, but had the role to keep alive in the public memory the war of 1877-1878 during the time of peace as well: The Romanian crown of the proclaimed King Carol in 1881 was not created from gold, as in local tradition, but out of steel from an Ottoman cannon captured in Pleven. The cannon was in fact coming from the King's country of origin, Germany and manufactured in Krupp Factory, but the symbolic element which reminded the war of independence and the main victory in Pleven was definitely more important. It was produced in Bucharest and the next kings of Romania continued to use it as well, as became the main symbol of Romanian Royalty. As an example, the last Romanian King, Michael, who was obliged to abdicate by the communist regime in 1947, had a copy of it placed on its coffin during the public celebrations of his death in 2017. The crown is kept in our days in the Treasury of the National History Museum of Romania in Bucharest and visitors are invited to observe its unicity (fig. 3).¹⁸

¹⁷ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolae_Grigorescu_-_Prizonieri_turci.jpg, (accessed 17.06.2023).

¹⁸ For details on the manufacture and decorations, see <https://www.mnir.ro/coroana-de-tel/>.

The third military aspect, which becomes visible when talking about Romanian-Ottoman relations, was the existence of the special position of military attaché inside the legation. During the decades up to the First World War, Romania did not invest much in this diplomatic position. Only three military officers were appointed as military attaches of Romania in the Ottoman Empire¹⁹: Romulus Magheru (1878-1879), Aristide Razu (1910-1913), and Lucian Trantomir (1913-1916) (fig. 4).



Fig. 3: Royal Steel Crown of Romania in the National History Museum of Romania²⁰

Looking at the dates it is clear that the opening of diplomatic relations determined the Ministry of War to send a first representative and after that, the position was not filled for decades, as the Romanian state did not pay special attention to military cooperation. The unrest in the Balkans, relations with Bulgaria as well as the troubled period of the Balkan Wars determined the revival of this institution. In a comparative perspective, the Ottomans sent regularly representatives from 1888 and 1904 they doubled the position: Yusuf Kenan Bey, state major 1888 – 1891; Hafiz Şevket Bey, major 1891 – 1906; Riza Bey, adjutant major, second military attaché – 1904-1906 are listed in the local yearbooks²¹ and identify for the moment. In this case is visible that the appointments correspond with the period the Ottoman Empire was looking for allies in the region and thus the position of military attaché in Bucharest was mandatory for getting the result, a military convention between the two states. From 1895, the Ottoman state approached the Romanian state to conclude a military

¹⁹ For details on this institution as well as on the activity of the last military attaché see Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Silvana Rachieru, *Reconstituirea unei biografii: pe urmele ataşatului militar al României la Constantinopol – Lucian Trantomir (1913-1916)* in “Analele Ştiinţifice ale Universităţii “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iaşi”, s.n., Istorie, LXV (2019), p. 535-551.

²⁰ Author’s photo.

²¹ *Anuarul Bucurescilor 1883-190*, Bucureşti.

convention, but the proposal was not received with enthusiasm by the local part, as King Charles preferred to keep a neutral position in front of the problems in the region. The idea was reiterated in 1897, in the context of the Greek problem, but the response was the same, even if this time negotiations took place, the Romanian side wanted a secret agreement, but information was published in different newspapers and was one of the reasons the king did not encourage the conclusion.²²

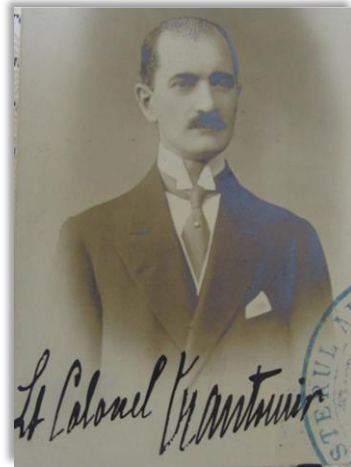


Fig. 4 : Lieutenant-Colonel Lucian ratomir²³

Last, but not least, the interference between diplomatic and military careers is depicted in the so-called episode Mehmed Sakir Paşa, 1893-1894. In the diplomatic correspondence between the Romanian Legation in Constantinople and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest one topic keeps the attention. The discussions about the possible appointment as minister plenipotentiary in Bucharest of Kabağağlızade Mehmed Şakir Pacha, brother of the Grand Vizier Ahmed Cevad Pasha (1891-1895) who participated on the Danube front in 1877-1878 war and was promoted due to his success.



Fig. 5: Kabağağlızade Mehmed Şakir Pacha (1855-1914)²⁴

²² For details concerning this negotiations and a detailed presentation of the the press echoues of 1910 discussions, see Alina Sava, *Relațiile României cu Imperiul Otoman 1878-1912*, PhD thesis, (Cluj, 2012), p. 62-88.

²³ ANI, Colecția Documente, Pachet 30.

²⁴ Şirin Devrim, Şakir Paşa Ailesi “Harika Çılgınlar”, (Istanbul, 1996), p. 22.

In August 30 1893, a telegraphic request was sent from the cabinet of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Mihail Mitilineu at the Royal Legation of Romania for the Royal agreement on the appointment of Şakir Pasha, first aid de champ of the Grand Vizirate as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the Sultan in Romania.²⁵ Mitilineu asked it through another telegram to Bucharest, emphasizing, “He is the brother of H.E. Grand Vizier, in consequence of Muslim religion. He is one of the most distinguished officers of the Empire.” The emphasis on his religion was important for the Romanian side which had a specific preference for Muslim diplomats, considered as possible intermediaries between the King and his Muslim subjects in Dobrudja.²⁶ The agreement came back in a few days and, few days later, Mihai Mitilineu, Romanian minister plenipotentiary in Constantinople, send a detailed report to the ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasizing the career and profile of the candidate and stressing that the Grand Vizier expressed his gratitude for the agreement.²⁷

About his career, Mitilineu mentions that he participated in the 1877-1878 war while he was still a student at the military school in Pangalti²⁸ in the position of adjutant of General Aziz Pasha, and lists also his military position after the graduation and promotion as staff captain, which proves his international experience as well: staff captain in Larissa in charged with the surrender of territories to Greece; staff captain in Monastir; staff officer at the Ministry of War Constantinople; military attaché in Çetine (Montenegro); military attaché in Rome; delegate in Crete for mapping the island; military commander in Rethimo (Crete); first adjutant of the Grand Vizier. He was recently promoted as brigadier general. His portrait as a career soldier is doubled by his image of a cultivated person, interested in ‘literary publications and history writings’, relatively young at almost 40 years old and who writes a history of Egypt. He aids to his qualities of good military, frank and correct those of a good “homme du monde”, gentleman, who speaks and writes in French.²⁹ In

²⁵ AMAE, fond Constantinopol, Vol. 360, dosar 4.

²⁶ For details on this specific request of the Romanian diplomacy, see the detailed analysis in S. Rachieru, *Diplomati si supusi otomani in Vechiul Regat*, p. 60 – 62.

²⁷ AMAE, fond Constantinopol, Vol. 360, dosar 4, nr. 522, 06.09.1893.

²⁸ Imperial Military School functioned in Pangalti.

²⁹ In her memoirs, the grand-daughter of Sakir Pasha portrays him as a Renaissance man, like his brother, Cevat Pasha: ‘both were talented military people, writers and historians. Both new very well six languages: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Italian and French. Both were amateur photographers. They developed the photos taken in dark rooms’ and

addition, Mitilineu collected information about the candidate around a lunch he organized where Şakir Pasha stressed that “I hope to be well-regarded in Bucharest, I will try to win the sympathy through my military frankness and the goodwill that I will always show to be conciliatory in business. One of my first visits, after my arrival, will be at the Ministry of War, where, as a soldier, I really want to have the most cordial relations.”

The candidate appeared to be perfect for the position in Bucharest, with a direct connection to the Grand Vizier, with the right education and combined the military interests of the Ottoman Empire. Due to unknown reasons so far, Mehmed Şakir Pasha had never arrived in Bucharest, being the only episode in those four decades of diplomatic relations when an announced and accepted candidate had not reached the mission in the end. He was found in May 1894 up to December 1895 as minister plenipotentiary in Athens instead.³⁰ At the same time, he was the only example when Bucharest was proposed as a career soldier and not a diplomat. One can ask what would have happened if Şakir Pasha had succeeded in winning the sympathy of the Romanian milieu, maybe the military convention would have been signed, for example. But these are pure speculations and the diplomatic relations were in the end conducted in a different direction, as in May 1894 arrived in Bucharest Mehmet Reşid Bey, a career diplomat who spent two years in Bucharest as minister plenipotentiary.

In the almost forty years of diplomatic relations, Romania and the Ottoman Empire kept different positions concerning the military support one has to offer to another. Romanian state, following the preference of its king, was much more interested in a neutral position in the Balkans, while the Ottomans were looking for allies in the local agitated context. As Bulgaria and Greece were initiating sometimes conflictual situation, the Ottoman Empire was trying to invest in its military, but at the same time diplomatic representation in Romania. Several moments where military history interperfered with diplomatic one were the subjects of this paper, in the attempt to identify a military approach to diplomatic “relations.

mentioning they had an impressive book collection and Sakir Pasha was very much interested in ceramics, creating himself. Şirin Devrim, *Şakir Paşa Ailesi “Harika Çılğınlar”*, p. 20.

³⁰ Sinan Kunalp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali (1839-1922). Prosopografik Rehber*, (Istanbul, 2003), p. 104.

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ROMANIA AND TURKISH STRAITS: ROMANIA MILITARY EQUIPMENT PASSING THROUGH THE STRAITS BETWEEN 1880-1908

Hakkı ÖZ*

Abstract

The subject of this study is to examine the issue of military equipment sent to Romania through the Turkish Straits between 1880 and 1908. The Turkish Straits have critical importance for the states bordering the Black Sea. The role of the Turkish straits in Romania's military modernization and armament activities was the main focus of this study. The research aimed to ascertain the type and quantity of equipment transited through the Turkish Straits to Romania. It was examined through the communication between the two sides. The attitude of the Ottoman State towards the shipments of military equipment through the Turkish Straits was observed. The study showed what kind of security measures the Ottomans took against the shipment which it allowed. The main motivation for this study is to fill a gap in the literature. This study was prepared by using the relevant documents in the Ottoman Archive.

Keywords: Abdülhamid II, Military Equipment, Ottoman-Romanian Relations, Romania, Turkish Straits.

Introduction

Romania, which gained its independence from the Ottoman State as a result of the War of 1877-178, turned to the supply of arms and ammunition in order to protect its independence and territorial integrity. Romania was in a more dangerous geography compared to other Balkan states. Its neighbors were stronger than Romania. The country could have been directly exposed to interventions by Russia or Austria-Hungary. In fact, during the 1877-78 War, Russian forces forcibly crossed the Romanian territory. The Bulgarian Principality and Romania, which emerged after the War of 1877-78, often had problems over territorial

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distribution. These crises, which were meticulously observed by the Ottoman State, did not turn into a hot conflict until the Second Balkan War. However, Romania was forced to engage in armament activities against its neighbor across the Tuna (Danube).

After the 1877-78 War, there was no direct border between the Ottoman State and Romania. In fact, Romania's armament process was not a threat to the Ottoman State. However, at the same time, other Balkan nations also started to procure arms from powers such as Britain, France, and Germany, whether as komita or states. The Ottoman State followed its rivals through its foreign representations (embassy, consulate, and military attache) in order to pursue a better armament policy than the states that threatened its territorial integrity.¹

One of the sources that made it easier for the Ottoman State to detect the military equipment purchased by Romania was their transportation via the Turkish Straits. Some equipment purchased from European factories had reached Romania through the Turkish Straits. Romania had to obtain permission from Sultan Abdülhamid II for the shipments it wanted to make through the Turkish Straits. Consequently, the Romanian authorities had to provide the Turkish authorities with detailed information about the shipment they wanted to pass.

1. Use of the Turkish Straits for External Shipments to Romania

The first equipment transit request of Romania identified in the archives by us took place on 13 August 1880. The Kingdom of Romania had purchased a steamer equipped with cannons for use on the Danube. The Romanian Embassy in Istanbul contacted the Turkish authorities to obtain permission for the steamer, which was owned by the Kingdom of Romania, to pass through the Turkish Straits. The Romanian Embassy informed the Turkish authorities in French that the steamer had been

¹ For example, the Ottoman State learned about Romania's order for 100,000 Mannlicher rifles through the Vienna Embassy. On January 15, 1894, Staff Lieutenant Colonel Hüseyin Sabri Bey, Military Attache in Vienna, informed Istanbul that he learned from a telegram sent from Bucharest that 70.000 of Romania's rifle order to the Steyr Factory had been sent to the Romanian government. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat (Y.MTV), 89/67, 8 Kânunusani [1]309 (20.01.1894); BOA, Y.MTV, 89/83, 15 Receb [1]311 (22.01.1894).

waiting at the entrance to the Çanakkale Strait for three days and was in danger. On 13 August 1880, the Romanian Embassy requested Abdulhamid II to allow (*irade*) the steamer to pass through the straits in the evening hours.² The Ottoman State informed the Romanian authorities via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a special agreement was required for the ferry purchased by Romania for use on the Danube River to pass through the Turkish straits.³ The Romanian steamer waiting in front of the Çanakkale Strait was given permission to pass, finally, on 14 September 1880.⁴

Ships carrying military equipment to the port of Galati were not required to have a Romanian flag. The factories, from which the military equipment was purchased, used ships registered under the flags of different countries for their shipment. For example, the British-flagged merchant ship Ragusa carrying four cannons to Romania was reported to the Ministry of Interior by *Kale-i Sultani* (Çanakkale) *Mutasarrıf Vekili* (Vice Governor) Sadık Bey on 24 October 1883 and *Karesi Mutasarrıfı* (Governor) Reşad Bey on 25 October 1883, one day apart.⁵

The Turkish side also accompanied the ship carrying military equipment to Romania through the Turkish Straits with one of the ships of the Ottoman Navy. It is understood that this became a rule. As soon as a steamer loaded with equipment entered the Turkish Straits, the Ottoman State would place at least one Turkish soldier on board, while a Turkish ship would accompany the steamer until it left Turkish territorial waters. For example, in the information sent to Yıldız Palace on 28 July 1885 by Bozcadalı Hasan Hüsni Pasha, the Minister of Navy, he informed the Sultan that the ship carrying 6000 kilograms of artillery powder purchased by Romania from France would be followed by the *Eser-i Cedid* steamer until it left Turkish territorial waters.⁶

² BOA, Yıldız Perakende Elçilik, Şehbenderlik ve Ateşemiliterlik (Y.PRK.EŞA), 2/21, 13 Ağustos 1880.

³ BOA, Mabeyn-i Hümayun Evrakı İradeleri (MB.İ), 63/184, 8 Ramazan [1]297 (14.08.1880).

⁴ BOA, İrade Hariciye (İ.HR), 9 Şevval [1]297 (14.09.1880).

⁵ BOA, Dahiliye Şifre Kalemi (DH. ŞFR), 119/36, 12 Teşrinievvel [12]99 (24.10.1883); BOA, DH.ŞFR, 119/39, 13 Teşrinievvel [12]99 (25.10.1883).

⁶ After completing its accompaniment mission, the *Eser-i Cedid* steamer went to bring coal from the Ereğli mines to Istanbul. BOA, Y.MTV, 18/60, 15 Şevval [1]302 (28.07.1885).

As a result of its military needs, the Romanian Ministry of War ordered 100,000 kg of artillery gunpowder and 50,000 kg of infantry gunpowder from the Rottweil Factory in Hamburg.⁷ On 14 December 1885, the Romanian Embassy sent a statement regarding this issue to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. Romanian authorities requested permission from the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* and *Liman Riyaset-i Aliyesi* to allow the passage of equipment purchased from the Rottweil Factory through the Turkish straits.⁸ The Ottoman State asked its legal advisors' opinion on whether such a shipment through the straits was legal or not or how to respond to this situation. On 31 December 1885, the legal advisors stated that Romania and the Ottoman State had friendly relations and that it was appropriate to let the equipment pass through the straits. However, as a precautionary measure to prevent abuse, the legal advisors recommended to the Bâbiâli that ships carrying equipment should have one or two Ottoman soldiers on board of the ships passing through the Turkish Straits.⁹

Apart from the Romanian Embassy's initiative, the German Embassy also applied to the Ottoman State for related equipment.¹⁰ In addition to the fact that the Rottweil Factory was a German factory, the ship that would take the ammunition to the Romanian port of Galati (Kalas) was also a German-flagged ship. The German factor could significantly affect the passage of the shipment through the Turkish Straits because the Ottoman State had tried to establish friendly relations with Germany after the War of 1877-78. In line with Abdülhamid II's foreign policy, the Ottoman State had to avoid moves against Germany or moves that would disturb the Kaiser. As a matter of fact, the smooth passage of military equipment purchased by Romania from German factories through the Turkish Straits could undoubtedly have supported the development of Turkish-German relations. On 13 February 1886, *Sadrazam Kıbrıslı Mehmed Kamil Pasha* informed the Sultan about the developments regarding Romania's ammunition shipments. On 14 February 1886, Sultan

⁷ BOA, Hariciye Nezareti Tercüme Odası (HR.TO), 295/35, 2 Kanunuevvel [130]1 (14.12.1885).

⁸ BOA, HR.TO, 295/35, 2 Kanunuevvel [130]1 (14.12.1885).

⁹ BOA, HR.TO, 369/80, 18 Kanunusani 1301 (30.01.1886).

¹⁰ BOA, İ.HR, 300/19027, 5 Cemaziyülevvel 1303 (09.02.1886).

Abdülhamid II allowed the passage of 150 thousand kilograms of gunpowder through the Turkish straits.¹¹

On 10 October 1887, the Ottoman Embassy in Berlin informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry that Romania had ordered a large quantity of gunpowder from the German factory Cramer to supply its military needs. The Embassy also informed the Foreign Ministry that the gunpowder would depart from the port of Hamburg and pass through the Turkish straits. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared the news from the Ottoman Embassy in Berlin with the *Sadaret* on 11 October 1887.¹² On 12 October 1887, *Sadrızam Kıbrıslı* Mehmed Kamil Pasha explained the situation in writing to the Sultan.¹³ The Romanian authorities contacted the Turkish side about the related ammunition on 13 October 1887. According to information provided by the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul, Romania had ordered 80,000 kilograms of prismatic gunpowder from Germany for the Romanian artillery. The gunpowder, which was to be shipped to Romania on a German-flagged steamer, was planned to depart from the port of Hamburg on 15 October 1887 and head to the Romanian port of Galac. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry was additionally informed that 80,000 kilograms of gunpowder would be loaded onto the steamer in 1600 crates.¹⁴

On 13 October 1887, the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul requested the passage of a German-flagged steamer loaded with gunpowder through the Turkish straits.¹⁵ When the archive documents are analyzed, it can be seen that the Turkish Embassy in Germany managed to inform the Ottoman Foreign Ministry about the shipment two or three days before the Romanian authorities in Istanbul. However, the Turkish side had no detailed information about the quantity and condition of the ammunition to be sent to Galac. The necessary information was obtained by the *Bâbiâli* through the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul. Abdülhamid II allowed Romania's prismatic gunpowder weighing 80 thousand kilograms to pass through the Turkish Straits. However, it was reported to the *Tophane*

¹¹ The ship carrying the gunpowder would end its voyage in the Romanian port of Galac. BOA, İ.HR, 300/19027, 10 Cemaziyülevvel [1]303 (14.02.1886).

¹² BOA, Yıldız Resmi Maruzat (Y.A.RES), 40/7, 23 Muharrem 1305 (11.10.1887).

¹³ BOA, Y.A.RES, 40/7, 24 Muharrem [1]305 (12.10.1887).

¹⁴ Each crate contained 50 kilograms of gunpowder. BOA, HR.TO, 295/52, 13 Teşrinievvel 1887 (13.10.1887).

¹⁵ BOA, HR.TO, 295/52, 13 Teşrinievvel 1887 (13.10.1887).

Müşiriyeti by the *Bahr-ı Siyah Boğazı Muhafız Vekâleti* that the merchant steamer departing from Hamburg was sailing under the British flag, not the German flag.¹⁶ *Tophane Müşiri* Ali Saib Pasha informed the Sultan that the merchant steamer had passed from the Bosphorus to the Black Sea on the night of 6 January 1888. According to Ali Saib Pasha's report dated 7 January 1888, the merchant ship was accompanied by a ship of the Ottoman navy while passing through the straits.¹⁷

In 1888, Romania continued to ask permission to pass ammunition through the Turkish Straits. Romania purchased 240 thousand kilograms of artillery powder from France for its army. An Italian-flagged ship was to take this Romanian order to Galati Port. As with other requests for passage, the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul appealed to the Sultan and the *Bâbiâli* through the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On 9 July 1888, the *Sadaret* informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry that Abdulhamid II had approved the passage of the ship through the Turkish Straits. The *Sadaret* ordered the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* to follow the ship carrying ammunition until it left the Turkish Straits by a ship of the Turkish navy.¹⁸

In July 1888, the Ottoman State once again allowed Romania to receive ammunition through the Turkish Straits. Romania ordered 155,000 kilograms of artillery powder from Germany to meet the needs of its artillery class.¹⁹ Romanian authorities contacted the Turkish side and asked for permission for the Dutch-flagged *Mimosa* steamer, which departed from Hamburg and was heading to Galaç Port by using the Turkish Straits. This request of Romania was accepted by Abdülhamid II. On 14 July 1888, the *Sadaret* informed the relevant order to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

¹⁶ The name of the British-flagged merchant ship carrying ammunition to Romania through the Turkish Straits was *Mascot*. BOA, Yıldız Perakende Askeri Maruzat (Y.PRK.ASK), 43/45, 22 Rebiyülahir 1305 (07.01.1888); the institution responsible for the defense of the Straits in the Ottoman State was the *Boğazlar Muhafızlığı*. The *Boğazlar Muhafızlığı*, which was connected to the *Seraskerlik* for a while, was again connected to the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* during the period of *Tophane Müşiri* Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa. Pınar Çevik Azab, *Tophane-i Âmire Müşiriyeti*, (İstanbul: Timaş Akademi,2023), pp. 218; Consequently, all security measures at the Straits' fortifications had to be taken by the *Tophane Müşiriyeti*. The *Tophane Müşiriyeti* was abolished in 1908. For more detailed information: Pınar Çevik Azab, *Tophane-i Âmire Müşiriyeti*, 205-237.

¹⁷ BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 43/45, 22 Rebiyülahir 1305 (07.01.1888).

¹⁸ BOA, Hariciye Tahrirat (HR.TH), 384/11. 29 Şevval 1305 (09.07.1888).

¹⁹ The artillery powder was to be placed in 3,001 barrels and shipped to Romania. BOA, HR.TH, 81/57, 5 Zilkade 1305 (14.07.1888).

the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* and the Ministry of the Navy. As seen in previous examples, the steamer *Mimosa* was to be escorted by an Ottoman naval vessel.²⁰

In order to prevent abuses, the Ottoman State placed one or two Turkish soldiers on board of the ships carrying military equipment to Romania. The task of these soldiers was to prevent Romanian military equipment from landing on the Turkish coast. These soldiers were probably escorting the ship loaded with military equipment from Çanakkale to Istanbul. For example, according to the telegram sent to *Mabeyn* on 15 October 1888, Captain Hüseyin Efendi and Corporal Osman accompanied the British steamer that crossed the Çanakkale to deliver three chests of guns and two chests of cartridges to Romania. The phrase “to escort the ship to Istanbul” seen in the telegram is evidence for this judgment.²¹

Until 1890, the Romanian equipment passing through the Turkish Straits was generally gunpowder ordered from German and French factories. In early 1890, ammunition purchased by Romania from a British factory passed through the Turkish Straits. On 5 March 1890, the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul requested to the *Bâbiâli* and the Sultan, through the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to have 172 chests of cartridges ordered by their country from the Maxim Nordenfelt Factory in London to pass through the Turkish Straits.²² Following previous examples, Abdülhamid II approved this passage of cartridges. On 13 March 1890, *Sadrâzam* Mehmed Kamil Pasha conveyed the relevant order to the *Tophane Müşiriyeti*, the Ministry of the Navy and the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²³

On 10 June 1891, the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul applied to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow 100,000 kilograms of gunpowder (*menşur-ı esmer* gunpowder) ordered by the Romanian Ministry of War from the German factory Cramer and Buchholz to pass through the Turkish Straits. The Romanian Embassy reported that the

²⁰ BOA, HR.TH, 81/57, 5 Zilkade 1305 (14.07.1888).

²¹ “... *Dersaadete kadar nezaret etmek için...*” BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 50/138, 3 Teşrinievvel [1]304 (15.10.1888).

²² The ship which was to take the equipment to Romania was British-flagged. BOA, HR.TO, 295/60, 22 Şubat 1305 (06.03.1890).

²³ BOA, HR.TH, 97/47, 21 Recep [1]307 (13.03.1890).

gunpowder was to be transported in two thousand crates to the Port of Galati under the command of a German captain named Adolf. In addition to the Romanian authorities, the factory also stepped in for the shipment to pass through the Turkish Straits. Baron de Ziegler, the representative of the Cramer and Buch Factory, applied to the Ottoman Embassy in Berlin for the passage of the relevant ammunition through Çanakkale.²⁴ As seen in previous decisions and in line with the Sultan's permission (*İrade*), Sadrazam Mehmed Kamil Pasha gave the necessary orders to the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* and the Ministry of the Navy on 11 July 1891. The Romanian Embassy in Istanbul was also informed via the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁵

The British-flagged steamer Summertown(?), which departed from the Port of Antwerp with weapons on board on 11 June 1893 and which was bound for Romania, was intercepted outside the port in Istanbul. According to the statement sent by *Dersaadet Liman Reisi* Dilaver to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry on 9 July 1893, the ship was stopped because the captain did not inform the Turkish Consulate in Antwerp about the passage. After the surveillance, the Turkish side allowed the steamer Summertown(?) to set off for Romania.²⁶

It can be said that Romania benefited from the bilateral relations between the Ottoman State and Germany. The German Embassy in Istanbul applied from time to time to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the ammunition purchased from the factories in their own countries to reach Romania through the Turkish Straits. On 29 December 1896, the German Embassy in Istanbul requested that 40,000 kilograms of dry gunpowder cotton -80,000 kilograms of wet gunpowder- ordered by Romania from the Rheinisch-Westfälische Company in Cologne to be shipped to Romania through the Turkish Straits.²⁷ Although the gunpowder would go to Romania, the shipment would be carried out by Germany. When the archive documents are examined, it can be seen that the Romanian authorities did not make a relevant application to the

²⁴ BOA, HR.TO, 34/103, 4 Haziran 1307 (16.06.1891).

²⁵ BOA, HR.TH, 110/96, 5 Zilhicce 1308 (11.07.1891).

²⁶ BOA, HR.TH, 131/30, 24 Zilhicce 1310 (09.07.1893); BOA, HR.TH, 131/88, 13 Muharrem [1]311(27.07.1893).

²⁷ The German Embassy in Istanbul informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry that the ammunition would be stored in closed crates and that 35 percent of the steamer would be in the water. BOA, Y.A.RES, 84/64, 29 Kanunuevvel [1]896 (29.12.1896).

Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time. The question is, then, why the Romanian authorities did not contact the Turkish side to pass military equipment through the Turkish Straits? The reason for this is that the Ottoman State did not allow Romania to pass military equipment through the Turkish Straits in 1893, stated that it was forbidden to pass arms and ammunition through the Turkish Straits and that this prohibition had existed since time immemorial. Most probably, the Romanian side used Germany as an intermediary to prevent such an incident from happening again. It can be easily said that in the eyes of the Ottoman State, bilateral relations with Romania were not a priority and important issue compared to Germany. How could the Ottoman State, which did not allow Romania's shipment in 1893, legitimately accept the German Embassy's request? Article 17 of the 1890 Trade Treaty between the Ottoman State and Germany provided this legitimacy. This article states that²⁸

“The importation or transit of gunpowder, dynamite, and all kinds of flammable substances, artillery, weapons, and ammunition into the Ottoman State is strictly prohibited. The passage of gunpowder, gunpowder-filled or hollow cartridges and bullets was also included in this prohibition, and if a special request was made by the German Embassy for the transit of prohibited weapons through the straits, the Ottoman State would normally allow it.”

After the application of the German Embassy in Istanbul, this article was evaluated by the *Bâbîâli* Advisory Commission. The Advisory Commission recommended to the Ottoman government that the steamer loaded with military equipment be allowed to pass through the straits under Turkish supervision. After all, the request had come from the German Embassy in Istanbul and the Ottoman State had to permit in line with this article. Otherwise, it would have acted contrary to the 1890 Turkish-German Trade Agreement. On 25 January 1897, a cabinet meeting on the

²⁸ “*Barut ve dinamit ve mevad-ı müştail-i mümasile ve top ve esliha-ı harbiye ve mühimmat-ı askeriyenin memalik-i saltanat-ı seniyyeye idhali veya transit tarikiyle imrarı katiyen memnudur.*

Barut ve barut ile memlû veyahut boş hartuçlar ile mermiyatın halinde mürurları maddesi dahi dâhil olduğu ve duhulü memnu eslihanın boğazlardan transit suretiyle nakli(?) için Almanya Sefareti tarafından suret-i mahsusada müsaade taleb olunur ise Ahval-i adiyede buna müsaade buyurulacaktır. Resmen neşr ve ilan buyurulacak merbut cetvelde tesri ve tadad olunan esliha tahdidat-ı umumiye-i mezkureye dâhil değildir. Esliha ve mühimmat ticareti doğrudan doğruya hükümet-i seniyyenin nezaret-i mahsusası altında kalır.” BOA, Haricîye Nezareti İdare (HR.ID), 2093/18, leff 10, 26 Ağustos 1890.

subject was held under the chairmanship of *Sadrazam* Halil Rifat Pasha.²⁹ After the cabinet meeting, the *Bâbiâli* decided that the shipment would pass through the Turkish Straits. The Ottoman State continued this policy starting from the first shipment as a security measure. When a steamer loaded with military equipment passed through the Turkish Straits, the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* would place an officer on board and a Turkish steamer would accompany it.³⁰ According to the additional security measure, after the steamer loaded with equipment left the Turkish straits and territorial waters, orders were to be given to the officials in charge of the coastal settlements to be vigilant to ensure that no weapons were secretly smuggled into Ottoman territory. It seems that the *Bâbiâli* considered the possibility of the ship secretly docking on Turkish shores after the sea pursuit. On 25 January 1897, *Sadrazam* Halil Rifat Pasha declared this decision of the government to Abdülhamid II.³¹ However, we have not come across any *İrade* on what Sultan Abdülhamid II decided on the issue. We do not consider that the Sultan acted contrary to the decision of the *Bâbiâli*. Because the German Embassy in Istanbul did not send any other request to the *Bâbiâli*. Probably the Ottoman State allowed the passage of 40,000 kilograms of dry gunpowder cotton through the Turkish Straits; otherwise, there would be more than one document on the subject in the Ottoman archives.

In 1898, the German Embassy in Istanbul submitted a new application to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the shipment of military equipment to Romania. Carol, a fabricator in Winterhof, Germany, planned to send 42 crates of cartridges sold to Romania to the port of Galaç through the Turkish Straits. The fabricator was to make the shipment with one of the steamers belonging to the Co Hamburg Levante Linie Company.³² However, despite the 1890 Trade Treaty, the *Bâbiâli* was not in favor of allowing such a shipment through the Turkish Straits. Because, if we assume that there were an estimated 1200 cartridges in each crate, a total of 50.400 cartridges would have passed through the Turkish Straits. The number of cartridges was more than enough for the Ottoman

²⁹ Galip Paşa, *Minister of Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, did not attend the meeting. All other ministers attended the meeting. BOA, Y.A.RES, 84/64, 21 Şaban [1]314 (25 Ocak 1897).

³⁰ BOA, Y.A.RES, 84/64, 21 Şaban [1]314 (25 Ocak 1897).

³¹ BOA, Y.A.RES, 84/64, 21 Şaban [1]314 (25 Ocak 1897); BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK, 49/71, 21 Şaban [1]314.

³² BOA, Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları (MV), 94/32, 16 Şaban [1]315 (10.01.1898).

State to have security concerns. Although the *Bâbiâli* did not want the shipment to pass through the Turkish Straits, Article 17 of the 1890 Trade Agreement required that permission had to be given. The German Embassy in Istanbul made multiple applications to the *Bâbiâli* regarding permission for the said cartridges to pass through the Turkish Straits. Despite the insistence of the German Embassy in Istanbul, the Turkish side resisted and did not permit the passage. In the same year, the German Embassy in Istanbul submitted a request for another batch of cartridges to be shipped from Germany to Bulgaria through the Turkish Straits. Similar to its denial for the cartridges destined for Romania to pass the straits, the Ottoman State also refused to permit the cartridges destined for Bulgaria from Germany to pass through the Turkish Straits.³³

However, the German Embassy in Istanbul insisted on using the Turkish Straits to transport military equipment to Romania and Bulgaria. The main reason for this insistence of the German Embassy in Istanbul was that the Ottoman State had previously allowed flammable materials destined for Russia to pass through the Turkish Straits. The German Embassy in Istanbul pointed out this situation as an example and stated that they should also be given permission. The German Embassy in Istanbul also claimed that the cartridges to be sent to Bulgaria and Romania were only samples. To gain the confidence of the Turkish side, the German Embassy also assured the Ottoman State that there was no smuggling. During this process, it was seen in the archive documents that the number of ballot boxes that would go to Romania changed. Instead of 42 crates of cartridges, as it was first declared, 81 crates of cartridges were to be sent to Romania.³⁴ Finally, the insistence of the German Embassy in Istanbul gave results and on 10 February 1898, the *Bâbiâli* informed Abdülhamid II that the passage was found appropriate. On 22 February 1898, Sultan Abdülhamid II allowed 84 crates of cartridges to pass through the Turkish Straits on their way from the port of Hamburg.³⁵ The German Embassy in

³³ The crate containing the sample cartridges planned to be sent from Hamburg to Bulgaria on a steamer weighed 50 kilograms. Abdülhamid II did not accept this shipment to be passed through the Turkish Straits, claiming that there were some drawbacks. BOA, MV, 94/32, 16 Şaban [1]315 (10.01.1898).

³⁴ In fact, 84 crates of cartridges were loaded on the steamer which was to deliver them to Romania. Three of these crates were to be given to Bulgaria. BOA, Yıldız Perakende Başkıtabet Dairesi (Y.PRK.BŞK), 55/62, 18 Ramazan [1]315 (10.02.1898).

³⁵ BOA, İrade Hususi (İ.HUS), 61/67, 30 Ramazan [1]315 (22.02.1898).

Istanbul informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry on 10 March 1898 that the name of the steamer carrying the cartridges to Romania was *Imperius*.³⁶

It can be said that Romania took advantage of Turkish-German relations to pass ammunition through the Turkish Straits. However, Romania was not only strengthening its army with weapons and ammunition from Germany but also purchasing military equipment from French and British factories. Romania had to apply to the Ottoman State on its own to pass the military equipment, which it had purchased from these two states, through the Turkish straits. In 1899, the Romanian Embassy in Paris contacted the Turkish Embassy in France and requested them to allow the cannons and equipment purchased from France to pass through the Turkish Straits on behalf of their Ministry of War. The details of the planned Romanian shipment are shown in the table below.³⁷

Quantity (crate)	Model	Content	Weight			Total Weight
			Crate	Content	Total	
1	PG 1	Crate with zinc-plated inside (Size: 2.700 m x 0.600 m x 0.450 m) Cannon with carriage	100 kg	570 kg	670 kg	670 kg
1	PG 2	Crate with zinc-plated inside (3.100 m x 1.800 m x 0.850 m) One carriage (without wheel) (320 kg) Tool for repairing shell casings (77 kg) One nail hammer (47 kg)	450 kg	444 kg	894 kg	894 kg

³⁶ BOA, Sadaret Bulgaristan (A{MTZ.(04)), 14/4, 26 Şubat 1313 (10.03.1898); On 10 May 1898, the German Embassy in Istanbul applied to the Ottoman State for another shipment of military equipment which was transacted between Winterhof and Romania to be transported through the Turkish Straits. The steamer *Imroz*, which was to sail from Hamburg via the Deutsche Levante Linie Company, planned to take 42 crates of cartridges suitable for Revolver pistols to the port of Kalas through the Turkish Straits. The German Embassy in Istanbul informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry that the steamer *Imroz* would sail from Hamburg on 4 June 1898. The German Embassy in Istanbul asked the Ottoman State for permission for the steamer *Imroz* to pass through the Turkish Straits. On 12 May 1898, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry shared this request with the Sadaret and asked what should be done about the issue. BOA, A}MTZ.(04), 55/42, 20 Zilhicce [1]315 (12.05.1898). We could not find any evidence concerning the Sadaret's or the Sultan's decision on this matter.

³⁷ BOA, HR.İD, 2127/41, 24 Haziran [18]99.

1	PG 3	Crate with zinc-plated inside (1.400 m x 1.470 m x 0.740 m) Two wheeled carriages	130 kg	130 kg	260 kg	260 kg
1	PG 4	Crate with zinc-plated inside (2.530 m x 1.700 m x 1.000 m) One limper	410 kg	320 kg	730 kg	730 kg
1	PG 5	Crate with zinc-plated inside (1.400 m x 1.470 m x 0.74 m) Two wheels for limper	130 kg	130 kg	260 kg	260 kg
8	PG 6 and PG 13	Crate with zinc-plated outside (0.600 m x 500 m x 0.,300 m) 25 Brass cartridges in each crate	18 kg	22 kg	40 kg	320 kg
1	PG 14	Crate with zinc-plated inside (0.500 m x 0.500 m x 0.100 m) 200 Fuzes	18 kg	16 kg	34 kg	34 kg
1	PG 15	Crate with zinc-plated inside (0.500 m x 0.340 m x 0.300 m) 200 Fuze material tools	20 kg	28 kg	48 kg	48 kg
20	PG 16 and PG 35	Crate with zinc-plated inside (0.570 m x 0.400 m x 0.280 m) 10 Bullets without fuze	12 kg	63 kg	75 kg	1500 kg 4716 kg

However, we have not been able to determine from the archive documents whether there was an order of Abdülhamid II or the *Bâbîâli* on the subject.

Towards the end of 1901, the German Embassy in Istanbul applied to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs once again to make shipments to Romania through the Turkish Straits. A German factory in Cologne (Köln) undertook to deliver 20000 kg of gunpowder and 5000 kg of cotton to Romania.³⁸ The German Embassy in Istanbul requested the Ottoman State to favor the passage through the Turkish Straits of the Romanian-flagged steamer, whose name and the date of its arrival in Çanakkale would

³⁸ BOA, MV, 103/36, 4 Ramazan [1]319 (15.12.1901).

later be notified to the Turkish authorities. Although the *Bâbiâli* did not accept this request of the German embassy, the German Embassy renewed its request for passage, citing Article 17 of the trade treaty signed in 1890.³⁹ On 7 January 1902, *Sadrazam* Mehmed Said Pasha informed the German Embassy in Istanbul that this passage would not be approved, citing the declaration on interstate trade.⁴⁰ Mehmed Said Pasha informed the German Embassy in Istanbul that the shipment could take place once the newly adopted trade declaration came into force.

2. Rejected Shipment Requests

In the last months of 1893, the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul requested permission for passage through the Turkish Straits to bring one Gatling gun, one fortification cannon, and one field cannon with their ammunition from England for testing in their country.⁴¹ The military equipment, which had been purchased from the Maksim Nordfielt Factory, was planned to be shipped from England to the Romanian port of Galac. On 1 December 1893, *Sadrazam* Kabağaçlızade Ahmed Cevad Pasha asked the Sultan whether there was any objection to Romania carrying out such a shipment through the Turkish Straits. However, without waiting for the approval of Yıldız Palace and the *Bâbiâli*, a steamer loaded with the mentioned equipment passed through the Çanakkale Strait, reached Istanbul on 2 December 1893 and anchored in front of the Harem pier. Abdülhamid II answered the *Sadrazam*'s question on 2 December 1893, on the day when the steamer arrived at the Harem Pier. Sultan said that Romania had been exceptionally allowed previous requests for the transit of military equipment, noting that the transit of arms and ammunition through the Turkish Straits has long been prohibited. Then the Sultan did not allow the steamer anchored in front of the Harem pier to pass the straits in order to go to the port of Galac.⁴²

³⁹ BOA, MV, 103/36, 4 Ramazan [1]319 (15.12.1901).

⁴⁰ BOA, HR.TH, 263/19, 27 Ramazan [1]319 (07.01.1902).

⁴¹ BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO), 320/23982, 21 Cemaziyülevvel 1311 (30.11.1893); The Gatling gun on the steamer, which sailed from England, was 37 mm in caliber. The field and fortification cannons on the same steamer were 7 mm in caliber. The related heavy weapons consisted of 37 crates with their ammunition. BOA, Y.A.RES, 68/20, 22 Cemaziyülevvel [1]311 (01.12.1893).

⁴² BOA, Y.A.RES, 68/20, 23 Cemaziyülevvel [1]311 (02.12.1893).

Abdülhamid II informed *Bâbiâli* that there were other routes other than the Turkish Straits for the passage of military equipment to Romania. Furthermore, the *Mabeyn-i Hümayun* ordered that whatever the approach or attitude of the Romanian Embassy had regarding the issue should be answered and dealt with by the *Bâbiâli*.⁴³ It seems that Sultan Abdülhamid II was quite disturbed that the steamer arrived at Istanbul without his knowledge. The Turkish side informed the Romanian Embassy in Istanbul via the Ottoman Foreign Ministry that such a shipment of arms was not permissible for passage through the Turkish Straits and that such passages had not been allowed in the past. So, what happened to the steamer and military equipment that had managed to reach Istanbul by entering the Çanakkale Strait without Turkish permission? The Ottoman State was no stranger to the military technology produced by the Maksim Nordfield Factory and wanted to increase its experience with Maxim weapons by introducing the heavy weapons on this ship into the army inventory. Abdülhamid II gave a directive to the *Bâbiâli* for the purchase of the military equipment in the steamer.⁴⁴ On 5 December 1893, Minister of Naval Affairs Bozcaadalı Hasan Hüsnü Pasha informed the Sultan that the Gatling guns and cannons were sent to *Tophane* and the ammunition was sent to Zeytinburnu Gunpowder Factory.⁴⁵

Some arms factories tried to send one or two of their pieces to the Balkan states as samples to better promote the weapons they produced. The British Embassy in Istanbul informed the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 April 1894 that the Maxim Nordenfelt Factory wanted to send some cannons as samples to Romania and Bulgaria through the Turkish Straits. The Maxim Nordenfelt Factory planned to send two cannons and 3610 cartridges to Romania. The British Embassy in Istanbul

⁴³ BOA, Y.A.RES, 68/20, 23 Cemaziyülevvel [1]311 (02.12.1893); the general attitude of the Ottoman State was to follow and control seriously such military shipments. The Ottoman State's aim in taking this stance was to make sure that military shipments passing through the Turkish Straits did not go to Armenians who were engaged in armed rebellion in Anatolia. After the 1877-78 War, Armenians in Anatolia influenced by nationalist movements attempted attacks on Turkish soldiers and massacres against unarmed Turkish people. BOA, Y.MTV, 87/177, 25 Cemaziyülevvel [1]311 (05.12.1893).

⁴⁴ BOA, Y.A.RES, 68/20, 23 Cemaziyülevvel [1]311 (02.12.1893). The *Bâbiâli* notified the *Tophane Müşiriyeti* and the Naval Ministry of the order regarding the purchase of the relevant equipment by bargaining. BOA, BEO, 322/24120, 23 Cemaziyülevvel 1311 (02.12.1893).

⁴⁵ BOA, BEO, 320/23970, 26 Cemaziyülevvel 1311 (06.12.1893).

applied to the Ottoman State for its permission for military equipment weighing 5600 kilograms including the weight of cannons to pass through the Turkish straits to Galaç.⁴⁶ It is seen in the archive documents that the British Ambassador tried to pressure the Ottoman State by referring to the arms and ammunition, which had previously passed through the straits in order to obtain permission.⁴⁷ However, we have not been able to determine what was the Sultan's decision on the subject although we studied the archive documents thoroughly.

The French arms company Schneider applied to the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to send a 75 mm caliber field gun with its ammunition to Romania for the military experiments that will take place in Bucharest in November. The Schneider Company planned to send the military equipment to the port of Galaç from Marseille on a steamer belonging to the Fraissinet Company. The company emphasized that they would bring the artillery and equipment back to Marseille after the end of the military experience in Romania. The Schneider Company requested that the Ottoman State's answer on the subject be given to them by 10 November 1898 because it had to bring the mentioned military equipment to the port of Marseille by 20 November, which was the date for the last steamer of the Fraissinet Company to depart. The Schneider Company provided the Ottoman Embassy in Paris with a detailed list of the equipment to be shipped.⁴⁸ The details of the planned shipment are shown in the table below:⁴⁹

⁴⁶ If the Turkish side allowed the shipment, the British Embassy in Istanbul would later report the name of the steamer to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Maxim Nordenfelt Factory had also planned to send two cannons and 250 cartridges for the Bulgarian army to test. The weight of the military equipment planned to go to Bulgaria was 4700 kilograms. The factory wanted to ship the mentioned military equipment in the same steamer to the ports in Romania and Bulgaria through the Turkish Straits. As a result, the British Embassy in Istanbul requested permission from the Ottoman State for a shipment of equipment weighing 10,300 kilograms through the Turkish Straits. BOA, Y.A.HUS, 293/52, 29 Mart [1]310 (10.04.1894).

⁴⁷ For more detailed information BOA, Yıldız Hususi Maruzat (Y.A.HUS.), 294/22, 12 Şevval 1311 (18.04.1894), BOA, Y.A.HUS, 294/22, 11 Şevval 1311 (17.04.1894).

⁴⁸ BOA, HR.TH, 219/45, 30 Teşrinievvel [18]98 (30.10.1898).

⁴⁹ BOA, HR.TH, 219/45, 30 Teşrinievvel [18]98 (30.10.1898).

Quantity (crate)	Crate size	Content	Weight (kg)
1 (zinc-plated)	(0.360)(0.530)(2.680)	One 75 mm quick-firing field gun ⁵⁰	620
1	(0.560)(1.350)(3.150)	One cannon carriage and special tool for the cartridge rack, etc. ⁵¹	840
1	(0.500)(1.500)(1.900)	One limper ⁵²	200
1	(0.850)(0.900)(1.380)	Ammunition chest ⁵³	200
1	(1.360)(1.400)(1.640)	Six wheels ⁵⁴	660
10	(0.420)(0.530)(0.550)	250 projectiles ⁵⁵	1900
1 (zinc-plated)	(0.250)(0.315)(0.720)	250 grenade fuzes and 300 capsules ⁵⁶	80
8	(0.420)(0.520)(0.600)	240 brass cartridges ⁵⁷	440
1	(0.230)(0.420)(0.600)	10 brass cartridges ⁵⁸	23
6	(0.500)(0.500)(0.800)	175 kg smokeless powder ⁵⁹	370
Total: 31			5.333

The Ottoman State did not give any answer to Schneider. As a result of this attitude of the Ottoman State, the French Embassy in Istanbul applied to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry on 8 November 1898 on behalf of the Schneider Company.⁶⁰ The French tried to get permission from the Ottoman State as soon as possible, because the factory wanted to send the cannon and equipment from Le Creusot to the port of Marseille by 20 November. Despite the involvement of the French Embassy in Istanbul, the process of the request moved very slowly. The *Sadaret* informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry on 4 December 1898 that it had given a negative response to the request of the French Embassy and the Schneider Company.⁶¹ The reason given was that the passage of such guns and ammunition through the Turkish Straits was not found appropriate. The

⁵⁰ 1 tane 75 mm çapında seri atışlı sahra topu.

⁵¹ 1 tane top kundağı ve fişek rafına özel alet vesaire.

⁵² 1 tane toparlak.

⁵³ Cephane sandığı.

⁵⁴ 6 tane tekerlek.

⁵⁵ 250 tane dökme dane ma çinko kapak.

⁵⁶ 250 tane humbara tapası ma 300 tane kapsül.

⁵⁷ 240 tane pirinçten kovan.

⁵⁸ 10 tane pirinçten kovan.

⁵⁹ 175 kg dumanstız barut.

⁶⁰ BOA, HR.TH., 219/45, 8 Teşrinisani [18]98 (08.11.1898).

⁶¹ BOA, HR.TH., 219/45, 20 Receb [1]316 (04.12.1898).

Sadaret also ordered that this situation should be explained to the parties involved in an appropriate language by stating that the due date had already passed.

It was also evident that Romania was selling weapons and ammunition abroad while it was buying military equipment for its army. The Romanian army probably tried to sell the old model rifles with their ammunition. The Turkish Straits were undoubtedly the most important transit point for shipments from Romania to continental Europe. However, Romania could not export arms and equipment via the Turkish Straits without the permission (*İrade*) of the Turkish Sultan. In 1903, the *Seraskerlik* was informed by Liege, Belgium, that Romania would send a ship loaded with 10,000 Martini-Henry rifles and 1,500,000 cartridges from the port of Ibrail and asked permission to pass them through the Turkish Straits. As we have already stated, the Ottoman State refrained from allowing arms shipments through the Turkish Straits. According to intelligence from Liege, the Romanians were going to give false information to the Turkish side by saying that the ship's cargo was iron. Thus, the question was whether the Ottoman State had the authority to control the cargo of ships passing through the Turkish Straits or not. According to the information given to the *Sadaret* by *Tophane Müşiri* Mustafa Zeki Pasha, the *Boğazlar Muhafızlığı* had no such authority. *Tophane Müşiri* Mustafa Zeki Pasha asked the *Sadaret* for its orders on what should be done regarding the issue.⁶²

On 24 February 1903, the *Bâbîâli* ordered the relevant ministries to take measures. According to these orders, the Ministry of Interior⁶³ and the Ministry of the Navy were responsible for taking precautions in the straits, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to consult the Ottoman Embassy in Bucharest for more information about the shipment.⁶⁴ The

⁶² The *Tophane Müşiriyeti* informed *Bâbîâli* that the *Boğazlar Muhafızlığı* had no authority to control the materials on the ships carrying out the shipment. The information about the cargo inside the ships passing through the Turkish Straits was given to the Turkish authorities by the captains of the ship. BOA, BEO., 2007/150560, 11 Şubat [1]318 (24.02.1903).

⁶³ For example, *Sadrızam* Mehmed Ferid Pasha sent a telegraph order to the Ministry of Interior to inform the provinces on the coast to be careful about the ship in question as soon as possible. BOA, Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemi (DH.MKT), 660/15, 11 Şubat [1]318 (24.02.1903).

⁶⁴ BOA, BEO, 2007/150510, 11 Şubat [1]318 (24.02.1903); Acting on Istanbul's order, the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest contacted the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for

Ottoman State was so impressed by the intelligence from Liege that the Ministry of Interior shared the information about the shipment with the Ministry of Zaptiye and the City Administration on 28 February 1903 and informed them to act carefully to prevent the weapons on board from being secretly smuggled into Istanbul.⁶⁵ On the same day, Sultan Abdülhamid II was involved in the issue. Through the *Sadaret*, the Sultan ordered the following issues to be clarified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first of these issues, for which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible, was to determine the buyers of these rifles and cartridges and the second issue was to determine by which steamer they would be shipped.⁶⁶ The whole purpose of the Ottoman State was to prevent this shipment from landing on Turkish territory and coasts or even to prevent any attempt to do so.⁶⁷ The concern occupying the minds of the Turkish side was the question of whether these weapons would fall into the hands of separatist groups. Consequently, it can be said that the Ottoman State saw Romania's arms exports as a threat to its own security.

On 8 March 1903, the Ottoman cabinet convened in *Bâbiâli* to determine what to do about Romania's exports. The Cabinet stated that Romania had made a similar request three years earlier and that permission had been granted and it was subsequently declared to the Sultan that Russia had enjoyed a right to passage for a similar arms shipment. According to the cabinet minutes, the Romanians stated that they sold these weapons as old iron and that they would be sent by a merchant's steamer. Sultan Abdülhamid II ordered the purchase of these weapons by the Ottoman State but according to the investigation of the *Bâbiâli*, it was realized that the rifles were too expensive, and this idea was abandoned. It was seen that *Bâbiâli* was in favor of the realization of this shipment, because, in the opinion of the *Bâbiâli*, if these weapons did not go to South America and remained in Romania, there was a possibility that they would be sold to separatist Bulgarian Komitadjis. Noting that Romania and the Ottoman

information about the shipment. According to the information obtained by the Embassy on 26 February 1903, the shipment was to head towards South America. The guns were bought by a merchant named "Bells?". Contrary to the intelligence from Liege, the weapons were to leave from the port of Constanta (*Köstence*), not from Ibrail. BOA, Y.A.HUS, 445/39, 3 Muharrem 1321 (01.04.1903).

⁶⁵ BOA, DH.MKT, 660/15, 15 Şubat [1]318 (28.02.1903).

⁶⁶ BOA, BEO, 2008/150569, 11 Şubat [1]318 (24.02.1903).

⁶⁷ BOA, BEO, 2008/150569, 11 Şubat [1]318 (24.02.1903).

State had friendly relations, the *Bâbiâli* also asked the Sultan to allow the arms sold by Romania to be shipped through the Turkish Straits.⁶⁸

On 31 March 1903, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the first official request to the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest for the shipment to pass through the Turkish Straits. The Turkish Embassy in Bucharest telegraphed Romania's request to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry.⁶⁹ *Sadrazam* Mehmed Ferid Pasha asked Sultan Abdülhamid II what should be done about the matter and reminded him of the government decision of 8 March 1903.⁷⁰ However, Sultan Abdülhamid II did not allow these rifles and ammunition to pass through the Turkish Straits.

Unlike the Sultan, the *Bâbiâli* wanted this passage to be approved. The main reason for this was the risk of the arms and ammunition falling into the hands of Bulgarian *Komitadjis* operating in the Balkans. In order to find out what happened to these weapons we tried to trace them in the Ottoman archives. According to military intelligence obtained by the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest via various channels, on 1 December 1907, the old model weapons in the hands of the Romanian army were as follows:⁷¹

Weapons	Amount
M-78 Martini-Henry Rifle	120,000
M-78 Martini-Henry Carbine	80,000
Old Model Russian Kranka Rifle	20,000
M-68 Peabody Rifle	25,000
M-67 Dreyse Rifle	60,000

According to the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest, the Romanian army used to have 135,000 Martini-Henry rifles. Based on the intelligence it received, the Turkish embassy informed the Ottoman State that the deficient 15,000 rifles had been sold to Bulgaria.⁷² If there was a shipment to South America in 1903, it should have appeared in this intelligence report. We believe that the rifles, which had not been allowed to pass

⁶⁸ BOA, Y.A.RES, 119/73, 23 Şubat [1]318 (08.03.1903).

⁶⁹ BOA, Y.A.HUS, 445/39, 31.03.[1]903.

⁷⁰ BOA, Y.A.HUS, 445/39, 4 Muharrem [1]321 (02.04.1903).

⁷¹ BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA, 51/54, 18 Teşrinisani [1]323 (01.12.1907).

⁷² BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA, 51/54, 18 Teşrinisani [1]323 (01.12.1907).

through the Turkish Straits in 1903, were sold to Bulgaria as the *Bâbîâli* predicted.

It was observed in the Ottoman archive documents that there were contacts regarding a cartridge trade between Romania and Morocco in 1907. Captain von Simon, a cavalry of German origin who was in charge of receiving 1,000,000 cartridges from Romania on behalf of Morocco, applied to the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest on 22 May 1907 to carry out shipments of these rifles through the Turkish Straits. Without waiting for Istanbul's opinion on the matter, the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest rejected von Simon's request, stating that the passage of arms and equipment through the straits was prohibited.⁷³

However, the Clemens Müller Company stepped in regarding the cartridges in question. The company applied to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin to transport 50,000 kilograms of old cartridges consisting of approximately 500 crates to the port of Tangier (*Tanca*) in Morocco, departing from Galaç on one of the steamships of the Deutsche Levante Linie Company.⁷⁴ On 16 June 1907, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin referred the matter to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry.⁷⁵ Under normal situations, any Turkish embassy could have rejected the issue without referring it to Istanbul. However, when it came to Turkish-German relations, conditions were delicate. Apart from this, there was also a separate and special relationship between the Ottoman State and the Müller Company, because the military equipment purchased by the Ottoman State from the Krupp Factory was brought to Istanbul by the Müller Company.⁷⁶ Thus, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin could not resolve the issue without consulting Istanbul. Claiming that a permit would set a bad example, the *Bâbîâli* rejected the request on 23 June 1907.⁷⁷

⁷³ BOA, HR.İD, 2127/73, 9 Mayıs 1323 (22.05.1907).

⁷⁴ Each crate contained 2000 cartridges. In total, 1,000,000 cartridges were planned to pass through the Turkish straits to Tangier on the Deutsche Levante Linie steamer. BOA, HR.İD, 2127/74, 7 Haziran 1323 (19.06.1907).

⁷⁵ BOA, HR.İD, 2127/74, 7 Haziran 1323 (19.06.1907).

⁷⁶ BOA, HR.İD, 2127/74, 7 Haziran 1323 (19.06.1907).

⁷⁷ BOA, BEO, 3084/231254, 12 Cemaziyelevvel [1]325 (23.06.1907).

Conclusion

The Ottoman State was uncomfortable with the transportation of arms or ammunition to a foreign country through the Turkish Straits. The main reason for this trouble was internal security. After the War of 1877-78, the minorities realized that the Ottoman State was in the process of disintegration. The Ottoman State took measures to prevent rebel groups from getting involved in armed actions. The Ottoman State was worried that arms and ammunition being transported to foreign countries were secretly going to rebel groups. It was observed that the sceptical approach towards Europe in the Ottoman State reached its highest level. Ottoman State was especially sceptical of all arms and artillery intended to pass through the Turkish Straits including sample arms shipments.

Military equipment carried to Romania through the Turkish Straits was mostly gunpowder. Despite its strong opposition to arms shipments, the Ottoman State seems to have been a little more tolerant towards gunpowder shipments. The highest number of shipments through the Turkish Straits to the port of Galati was realized in 1888. In 1888, 475,000 kilograms of gunpowder were shipped to Romania through the Turkish Straits. The Ottoman State declared that the passage of weapons and explosives through the straits had been prohibited since time immemorial and rejected some shipment requests that it deemed dangerous on this basis. It is understood that the Ottoman State allowed some of the shipments to maintain or improve friendly relations with Germany. However, it did not allow all the shipments that Germany wanted.

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DEFENCE INTO OFFENSIVE: PRELIMINARIES TO A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ROMANIAN ARMY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Abstract

This paper starts from the assumption that the army, as an institution of the modern state, may not be separated from the society it is aimed to serve and represent. Therefore, the study on the Romanian army during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century must consider not only the impact of the peacetime preparations on the actual ways and means campaigns were fought from 1913 until 1919 but also other societal aspects. The history of the Romanian army cannot be understood without a deeper study of aspects such as demographics, real social structures, dependency on weapon and ammunition imports, physical training, and mental preparedness. Another fundamental aspect is the international political context, due to which the long-term defensive preparations were rapidly changed into offensive plans. This is the main aim of this analysis, which should serve as an initial contribution to a wider body of work on the social history of the Romanian army before the Great Union of 1918.

Keywords: Defensive Doctrine, First World War, Physical and Mental Training, Romanian Army, Second Balkan War.

This paper starts from the working hypothesis that an army cannot and may not be separated from the context of a society at a given time. Political views, ideological beliefs, economic constraints, social conditions, military doctrines, and diplomatic decisions defined how the Romanian Army was organised, drafted, equipped, trained, and fought during the emergence and consolidation of the modern nation-state. My thesis is that the history of the army is deeply entangled in the history of the modernisation of Romania, with all its successes and failures.

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Therefore, I am trying to understand the position of the army within Romanian society, beyond legislation, numbers, and strategic plans.

I begin by briefly presenting the organisational structure of the army and the ways and means this was achieved during the modern era. Based on this, I propose for discussion several points of interest as examples of the interaction between the society and the army in Romania: the respect shown by society, demographics, social issues, physical training, dependency on imports, and mental preparedness. Though rather pointed out shortly than demonstrated in-depth, these six points should serve as a basis for a social history of the Romanian army at the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, I shall exemplify the above-mentioned issues of interest with short examples from the 1913 and 1916-1918 campaigns. Applied to the history of the modern Romanian army during the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, defence into offensive turns out to indicate more than the ability to launch successful battlefield counterattacks. Though definitely able to turn the tides in dramatic moments, which was a feature highly praised by historians and writers alike, the Romanian army had to cope with much more significant changes. Therefore, the syntagm used in the title becomes revelatory for the re-alignment of political alliances and military doctrine, not to forgo the social perceptions of the modern-age Romanian army.

Should one look at the list of military confrontations involving Romanian troops during the second half of the 19th century, the impression would be that -except for 1848 (Wallachian troops fighting in support of the revolution against Ottoman soldiers¹) and 1863 (the Costangalia incident, Romanian troops trying to stop Polish insurgents²)- military offensive appears to have been a deliberate policy. Twice the Danube (1877³ and 1913⁴) and once the Carpathians (1916⁵) were crossed.

¹ Ela Cosma, "Războaiele uitate ale românilor 1848-1849", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "George Barițiu"*, LIX, Supliment (2020), p. 17.

² A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană. XIII. Domnia lui Cuza Vodă 1859-1866*, I, (București: Cartea Românească, 1930), pp. 171-173.

³ The War for the Independence of Romania in 1877-1878 was fought south of the Danube, Romania taking the side of Russia against the Ottoman Empire.

⁴ During the Second Balkan War, on 11 July 1913, Romanian troops crossed the Danube and marched towards Sofia.

⁵ After an initial long neutrality, Romania sided with the Entente, although it was bound by a secret defensive treaty with the Triple Alliance. On 15/27 August 1916, the Carpathians crossed into Transylvania.

However, such a view would only account for a superficial glance. All the above-mentioned actions were dictated by complicated international political contexts rather than being a deliberate strategy of the Romanian government or the expression of an aggressive society.

It was quite the opposite: after the War of Independence, fortification works were commissioned for Bucharest and South-Eastern Romania. An extensive system of forts was built around Bucharest, with large financial investments during the last decades of the 19th century. As in the cliché, no cannonball was ever fired from the forts⁶ rendered useless by the unexpected evolutions of the initial Romanian First World War campaign. The logic of the defensive plans is easy to understand: before 1859, the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia, formally under Ottoman rule, were rapidly turned either into a war theatre or a supply base for the strong neighbouring empires. Austria-Hungary and Russia also held territories with populations consisting mostly of the Romanians. The 1859 Union was seen as a first step towards independence and national unity. This issue alone affected the cultural, educational, and political life of both the modern state of Romania and the territories under foreign rule. Within such a context, the affiliation to the Triple Alliance was a well-guarded secret⁷ but not a guarantee against possible attacks from Russia or Austria-Hungary itself. Broadly speaking, Romania was building a defensive army, but the fluidity of the international conditions forced Romania to take precisely opposite measures and required better offensive plans.⁸

It is easy to reconstruct the organisational structure of the Romanian Army at the beginning of the 20th century. Military service was compulsory since 1864. Among the few exceptions allowed (such as physically or mentally disabled, orphans, sons of widowed women or disabled men), there was a very interesting exception: for the students

⁶ On the fortifications issue, see Jean-François Pernot, "Éléments pour une mise en perspective de la défense de Bucarest à la fin du XIX^e siècle", *Revue historique des armées*, 244/2006, <http://journals.openedition.org/rha/5802> (accessed 30 June 2023). See also *România în anii Primului Război Mondial. Caracterul drept, eliberator, al participării României la război*, I, (Bucureşti: Editura Militară, 1987), p. 260.

⁷ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial. Caracterul drept, eliberator, al participării României la război*, I, pp. 212-213.

⁸ On the Romanian offensive plans during the First World War, see Victor Atanasiu, "Unele considerații asupra angajării României în Primul Război Mondial – Ipoteza Z", *Studii*, 24, 6, (1971), pp. 1214-1215.

aiming to become teachers in the state schools or priests.⁹ Disregarding all the much-debated dysfunctionalities of the school system, this should be seen as a token of precaution. One must note that during the 1877-1878 Independence War the students were banned even from volunteering. For the newly established state, university graduates who might educate others were a precious asset.

One must also note that in Romania the military and political factors from the very beginning created the need to emulate military systems that had already proven successful. During the reign of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866), a French military mission was brought to assist the initial phases of the formation of the army based on conscription. The choice reflected the strength of French influence in society and the political establishment. French books of rules, methods of training, and weaponry were introduced starting from 1860. However, in 1869, the new prince¹⁰, Carol, who was from the German house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, preferred to put an end to the activities of this French mission and started his own series of reforms.¹¹

During the second half of the 19th century, a complete military educational system was also created. Schools of all levels and specialities prepared the officers, underofficers, and all the logistical personnel needed. Sons of officers were offered places in special schools and military high schools, thus fostering family traditions.¹² Among the graduates of these schools, one may count several important officers; the best example being that of Marshal Constantin Prezan (1861-1943), whose actions during the First World War and the 1919 War against the Hungarian Soviet Republic were instrumental.¹³

⁹ *Lege asupra oraganizării puterii armate (1868)*, Constantin Hamangiu, *Codul general al României (Codurile și legile în vigoare 1860-1903). Volumul II. "Legi uzuale" 1860-1903*, (București: Leon Alcalay, 1903), pp. 1488-1501.

¹⁰ In 1866, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was deposed after a coup and replaced by a foreign prince. This was one of the desiderata of the unionist movement, an idea largely seen as not granting an equilibrium-breaking upper hand to any political party or social elite family.

¹¹ Maria Georgescu, "La mission militaire française dirigée par les frères Lamy", *Revue historique des armées*, 244/2006, <http://journals.openedition.org/rha/5832> (accessed 30 June 2023).

¹² *România în anii Primului Război Mondial. Caracterul drept, eliberator, al participării României la război*, I, pp. 60-61.

¹³ Petre Otu, "150 de ani de la nașterea Mareșalului Constantin Prezan", *Studii și Comunicări*, 4, (2011), p. 232.

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many young aspiring officers, including members of the royal family, were sent to study and train abroad (in Austria-Hungary, France or Germany). Romanian military attachés were actively watching reforms in the countries of their post and were invited to observe and report home on the manoeuvres of armies in their place of duty.¹⁴ Should neither a legation be already opened nor a military attaché appointed, carefully chosen officers were sent as observers at manoeuvres. Such was the case of General Alexandru Socec, appointed by King Carol I to report on the cavalry drill in Sweden.¹⁵

In March-April 1908, several months after the tragic peasant uprising from 1907, a new legislation concerning the organisation of the army was passed. Several regiments were created and a new territorial organisation of the territory was established. By 1915, the Romanian Army had five corps, of course consisting of infantry, cavalry, artillery, and a small navy, with all the necessary medical, juridical, and logistical services.¹⁶ The notable absence was that of a combative air force.

By 1908, the army was already a highly respected institution. Five years later, the campaign south of the Danube in the Second Balkan War proved a definite capacity to mobilize, equip, and manoeuvre the entire national army. However, during the same time, deep social fractures politicised state institutions and training issues. The 1913 campaign is an excellent opportunity for researchers to analyse the impact of the reign of Carol I (1866-1914, King of Romania as of 1881) on the army. Under his command and supervision, the army crossed the Danube twice, in 1877 and 1913. Many times, his Prussian military training, ability to cope with warfare living conditions,¹⁷ and even lifelong preference for military attires were underlined. Just like the foreign policy, the defence policy was taken for granted as being the King's prerogative. This went well beyond the constitutional framework. Prime Minister during the Second Balkan War, Titu Maiorescu, wrote in his memoirs that the Minister of War was

¹⁴ National Library of Romania, Fund Saint-Georges, Archive of General Prince Dimitrie Soutzo, P IX/3 – 106, passim.

¹⁵ National Historical Central Archives, Fund General Alexandru Socec 1877-1951, file 9/1900-1906, f. 45v.

¹⁶ “Lege pentru Organizarea Armatei”, *Monitorul Oficial*, 1/14, (aprilie 1908), pp. 15-19.

¹⁷ “Cu iubire tandră, Elisabeta” – “Mereu al tău credincios, Carol”. *Coroșpondența perechii regale. Volumul I. 1869-1888*, ed. Silvia Irina Zimmermann, Romanița Constantinescu, (București: Humanitas, 2020), p. 166, 200, 220.

subjected directly to the King, without much control from the rest of the Government,¹⁸ hence the King's approval for this position was more problematic than for any other high positions.

There is another aspect that must be considered in the 1908 reform, apart from the accumulation of social tensions and the lack of investments in agriculture. The population of Romania was fast-growing and very young. Between the 1899 and 1912 censuses, Romania had a population growth of 21.46%; the majority of the population of 7,234,920 people were in the age group of 0-25 years. 80% of the population lived in rural areas, mostly in poor conditions. 93.5% of the population was represented by ethnic Romanians.¹⁹ Population growth was not reflected by the incipient industrialisation of the country. Such numbers may explain the reason why 16% of the entire population (or 32% of the male population) was one way or another under arms (combat and support troops, to which one must add the workers from relevant industrial settlements²⁰) in August 1916. Moreover, when the government decided to leave Bucharest in the autumn of 1916, youngsters -e.g., the Boy Scouts of Romania and all those suitable for the draft- were required to follow the army in Moldova.²¹ Besides the undoubted patriotism, the Boy Scouts offer an excellent insight into the social fracture, which defined modern Romania.

However, the best examples of social inequalities can again be drawn from the 1913 campaign. Volunteering was quite a phenomenon during Romania's involvement in the Second Balkan War. This explains, to a certain extent, the important number of ego-literatures written and published soon after the war. Among the volunteers, one group stands to attention: the descendants of wealthy families, who could buy aeroplanes for fun but who could also act as an impromptu air force in the service of the state and nation.²² When compared with the mass of the population, the

¹⁸ Titu Maiorescu, *România, războaiele balcanice și Cadrilaterul*, (București: Editura Machiavelli, 1995), p. 34.

¹⁹ *România. Un secol de istorie. Date statistice*, (București: Institutul Național de Statistică, 2018), p. 21.

²⁰ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial. Caracterul drept, eliberator, al participării României la război*, I, p. 226.

²¹ See the entire demonstration in my previous contribution, Bogdan Popa, *A Passage to Manhood: The Boy-Scouts of Romania during the First World War*, în "Revista Istorică", tom XXVII, nr. 1-2, (2016), pp. 29-48.

²² George Costescu, *Începuturile aviației române*, (București: Tipografia "Presa", 1944), p. 151, 156.

contrast becomes obvious. For, whilst career officers decried the lack of discipline of the volunteer airmen, most of the soldiers were able to compare their own status with that of the peasantry South of the Danube, once they started to observe Bulgaria better. The comparison was judged, even by the contemporaries, as not in Romania's favour.²³ This brings another aspect to this discussion. Illiteracy was a constant self-critique in the Romanian cultural milieu. Teaching newly drafted soldiers to read and write was enforced during the military service. Among the many different "voices of memory", the peasants' was the least present. Many authors of journals and memoirs noted their resilience and the absence of complaints when facing the conditions of a campaign fought during a hot summer and marred by a cholera epidemic.

The social fracture became even more manifested during the First World War. After the inglorious retreat to Moldova (Eastern Romania) and the stabilization of the front lines, the Ministry of War simply ordered officers to show solidarity and empathy towards their soldiers. Some officers were aware and perhaps privately critical towards the social realities, even if they admitted that they were not the ones to fix the tremendous inequalities.²⁴ The rising social tension was solved not through war but occurred as a consequence of it. The most important social outcome of the wars from 1913 to 1919 was the agrarian reform and the right to vote for all men, regardless of their level of education.

Less visible, though more expected according to certain contemporary voices, the social fracture was even clearer in the issue of the precarious physical training of the army. During the 19th century, the idea of physical training, which was put into practice either through

²³ Constantin Paul, Aurel Marcu, *Campania în Bulgaria*, (București: Editura Institutului de Arte Grafice "Flacăra", 1913), p. 70; Constantin Argetoianu, *Pentru cei de mână. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri. Volume II. 4, 1913-1916* (București: Humanitas, 1991), p. 23; Nicolae Bănescu, *Însemnări din campanie (22 iunie – 8 august 1913)*, (București: Institutul de Arte Grafice Universală, 1913), p. 22; D. Brumușescu, *Însemnări din campania anului 1913 în Bulgaria*, (București: Institutul de Editură și Arte Grafice Flacăra, 1915), p. 116; Mihail Sadoveanu, *44 de zile în Bulgaria*, (București: Cartea Românească, 1925), p. 16.

²⁴ Statul Major al Apărării. Arhivele Militare Române. Depozitul Central de Arhivă, *Soldatul român în anii Războiului de Întregire Națională: atitudini și stări de spirit. Documente*, co-ordinated by Corneliu Postu, Petrișor Florea, Leonard Mocanu, George-Daniel Ungureanu, (București: Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2020), pp. 91, 145-146, 353.

competitive or non-competitive individual or group gymnastics and sports, was interwoven with that of war as a national and civic duty. This was also the case in Romania, but with the specificity that the prejudice of physical force, fitness, speed, or resistance was innate to the vast peasant population, fortified by the daily agrarian chores. The few sports theoreticians, who were active during the decades before the Second Balkan and the First World Wars, and the high members of the military pointed out such pernicious ideas.²⁵

Physical training must be neither absolutized nor seen as the ultimate answer to war preparations. The case of W. Brandl, a young man living in Bucharest but summoned to serve his native country (the Bucharest press was strangely unsure whether it was Germany or Austria-Hungary) demonstrated this idea. In May 1915, W. Brandl came back from the front and found time to register for an athletic competition in Bucharest, though he was “overwhelmingly shattered by the life he had during the campaign.”²⁶

There is also one more aspect worth mentioning when examining Romania’s war preparations and actual campaigns: its dependency on weapon and ammunition imports. Besides the political configuration of the alliances, Romania’s geographical position and the fact that an important number of foreign machinists were forced to leave Romania to serve in their own national armies forced the Romanian government to search for solutions and start producing ammunition and weaponry.²⁷

This lengthy discussion on the prowess of the 1913 campaign, being successful despite the obvious social fractures, lack of physical training, and dependency on ammunition and weaponry imports, should not overshadow one of the most striking features of Romania’s 1916-1918 and 1919 campaigns. Despite the difficult start of the war, a remarkable mental preparation resulting from the internalisation of the keen sense of humiliation and defeat was achieved.

²⁵ “Sportul în Armată”, *Din lumea sporturilor*, I, 2, 13 November 1907, p. 3; Grigore Crăiniceanu, *Despre istoria armatei române*, *Academia Română. Discursuri de recepție IV (1907-1919)*, ed. Dorina N. Rusu, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2005), p. 370.

²⁶ “Un concurent... din războiu”, *Sportul*, IX, 17-18, (6 November 1915), p. 3.

²⁷ Gr. G. Stratulescu, *Amintiri de colaborare cu Vintilă Brătianu la fabricarea de muniții și armament în țară*, (București: Independența, 1936), *passim*, for an insider’s view on the matter.

There is perhaps not a better example of this issue other than that of Lieutenant Grigore Romalo (1890-1928). The frustration of this young officer, who witnessed the initial defeats and the chaotic evacuation to Moldova, was the source behind his failure to give the proper attack order at 4 a.m., on 11 July 1917. One might say that during a battle, the uttering of the most inappropriate and offensive words towards the enemies is understandable. His soldiers certainly agreed and cheered. But this small story, which may be unimportant in the larger picture of the battle of Mărăști, proves that despite all the problems not only Grigore Romalo was changed by the war, but his soldiers also were changed men. This is just one example of how the army as an institution and the soldiers as individuals changed in a very short time.

Preparing for defence, but having to take the offensive, proved to be a constant characteristic of Romania's military history in the modern era. In 1913, the decision to cross the Danube put the entire military system to a test. The results were largely seen as positive but the enthusiasm thus stirred only masked several serious issues. These led to optimism, which backfired thoroughly in the autumn and winter of 1916 when the army had to abandon Bucharest just after its initial victories and settle a defensive frontline. However, the most disturbing factors for the evolution of the military must be searched for in the structures and evolutions of the Romanian society itself. Both the achievements and the failures of the modernisation process were reflected by the evolution of the Army as a state institution. Therefore, while studying the social history of the army one should consider several factors. In this short contribution, I have highlighted several such aspects, which reveal the intricate connection between the military, the political establishment, and the economic development of the country.

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AUSTRIAN-OTTOMAN ALLIANCE IN THE DEATHBED AND ROMANIAN FRONT

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Abstract

As multinational empires, one can consider that the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire had a lot in common to cooperate at the beginning of the First World War. However, before the First World War, controversial topics were hindering the development of their relationship. Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia in 1908, its indifferent attitude to the Italian's annexation of Tripoli, and its eagerness to join the other powers in supporting the evacuation of Adrianople in the Balkan Wars cooled the relations between the two multinational empires.

Russia was the main threat to both empires and induced them to search for a way to constitute an alliance as the war was getting closer. With territorial dreams, Italy was another important coercion for the Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Empires, driving them to become allies. After the Ottomans had lost their European territory, a buffer zone with Austria-Hungary was created and the empires were no longer neighbors. Thus, Vienne and Istanbul could find a way to merge their interests in the Balkan Peninsula.

At the end of its futile attempts to find a way to be a member of the Entente Powers, the Ottoman Empire joined the Alliance of Central Powers after the invitation from Austria-Hungary. As the First World War raged on, the relationship between the two empires entered an intense phase. Despite its own financial difficulties, Austria-Hungary tried to alleviate the war burden on the shoulders of the Ottoman Empire with little aid between 1914 and 1918. Moreover, Austria-Hungary deployed primarily Howitzer and Mortar batteries, motorized units, medical teams, military-technical personnel, and ski instructors to support Ottoman units on the battlefield.

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In exchange for the support from the Austrians, the Ottoman Empire deployed its elite soldiers to the battlefields of Europe and on the fronts of Macedonia, Romania, and Galicia while being deprived of the augmentation in its own fronts. As the Austro-Hungarian Army was crushed under the Brusilov Offensive in June 1916, the VI. Ottoman Corps was sent to Romania. However, the Romanian Campaign ended in February 1917, when the VI. Corps remained in Romania until April 1918. Despite the collaboration and cooperation during the war, both multinational empires lost the war and eventually collapsed.

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Romania, Central Powers, the First World War, Romanian Front.

Introduction

The relations between the Austria-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire started with the Ottomans' conquest of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1526. However, the Eastern European border in the Balkans, separating Christianity and Islam, was the stage of countless bloody wars between the Ottomans and Austrians until the last Austro-Ottoman War in 1791.¹ Subsequently, with the new world order, Metternich and all his successors were aware of the fact that had the Ottoman Empire crashed, the fragments would fall upon their heads.²

There had been some common features in the characteristics of the two countries. The main common feature was that just like the Ottomans after the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877-1878, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire had become the sick man of Europe in 1866 after its war with Prussia.

While nationalism deteriorated both imperial states by giving their mix of peoples a sense of new nationhood relations with mutual struggle

¹ Christon Archer, John R. Ferris, Holger H. Herwig, Timothy H.E. Travers, *Dünya Savaş Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Tümgözen Yayınları, 2006), p. 254; Kemal Beydilli, "Avusturya Tarihi", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 4, (1991), p. 174-177; <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-avusturya-siyasi-iliskileri-tr.mfa>, (accessed 24.07.2023).

² A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), p. 215. For the Austrian support to the Ottoman Empire, see Kemal Beydilli, "Avusturya Tarihi".

turned into an alliance in the First World War. Ottoman and Austrian soldiers fought together on the Galician front in the First World War.³

However, although there seem to be similar interests in the foreign policies of both countries, Austrians had several concerns about direct support for the upholding of the Ottomans. These concerns could be named as the fear of losing Balkan states to Russian influence, the probability of unrest in the Austrian-Hungarian army by Ottomans suppressing national revolts with power, and a possible decrease in trade between Balkan states.

Austria was neither a Turcophile nor a supporter of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire:

“As an old and declining Power inordinately sensitive about its prestige, Austria-Hungary was perhaps more determined than the others to assert her rights as a Christian Great Power in the Ottoman Empire, ruthlessly enforcing both her own Kultusprotektorat and the whole capitulatory system. The former was largely symbolic but still immensely damaging to Ottoman pride, the latter certainly restrictive of the economic development of the Empire. Herein no doubt lies a measure of Austro-Hungarian responsibility for the failure of the Ottoman Empire to develop into a viable member of the European states system. Moreover, a cultural and political gulf continued to divide the Habsburg and Ottoman empires even in the days of the wartime alliance. It is not an inexorable community of fate, but simply the coincidence in time of the blows sustained by the two empires in the First World War, that accounts for the fact that in their deaths they were not divided.”⁴

In the Ottoman Empire, there were no military advisory groups from Austria whereas France, Italy, and Britain had. While England took

³ <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-avusturya-siyasi-iliskileri-.tr.mfa>, (accessed 24.07.2023); Jeremy Black, *Savaş ve Dünya (Askeri Güç ve Dünyanın Kaderi 1450-2000)*, trans. Yeliz Özkan, (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009), p. 388.

⁴ F. R. Bridge, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, 1900–18”, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empires*, (London: FRANK CASS & CO. LTD, 1996), p. 46.

the responsibility of reorganizing the Ottoman Navy, France and Italy were employed to train Gendarmerie.⁵

Austrian-Hungarian and Ottoman Alliance

Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 and its passive attitude in the Tripoli and Balkan Wars created a distance between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire before the First World War. With a wide breach of understanding of extensive interest in politics and culture between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, they agreed to participate in an alliance only under German pressure. After the outbreak of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire and the Austria-Hungaria Empire entered an unstoppable path and they started to work on establishing an alliance. Austrians were not considering Turkey as "a state in the European sense of the word". On the other hand, Austria-Hungary was a member of an international world order of five or six Powers: the "Concert of Europe". The Great Powers did not treat Turkey as an equal when they named her a member of the Concert in 1856.⁶

With these considerations in mind, Austria-Hungarians reluctantly consented to the abolishment of the Capitulations, which aroused mutual distrust lasting until the end of the war.⁷ Bridge summarizes the atmosphere as such:

"A cultural and political gulf continued to divide the Habsburg and Ottoman empires even in the days of the wartime alliance. It is not an inexorable community of fate, but simply the coincidence in time of the blows sustained by the two empires in the First World War, that accounts for the fact that in their deaths they were not divided."⁸

However, the relations intensified with the start of the war. Austro-Hungarian implemented its Eastern and Ottoman policy within the Ottoman borders between 1914 and 1918. Austria-Hungarian Empire aided financially to the Ottoman Empire to some extent to alleviate the

⁵ Bülent Durgun, *Balkan Harbi'nde Osmanlı Ordusu'nun Ulaştırma Faaliyetleri (1912-1913) (Transportation Services of Ottoman Army during the Balkan Wars)*, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2018), p. 147.

⁶ Bridge, "The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, 1900–18", p. 43, 45-46.

⁷ Bridge, "The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, 1900–18", p. 43, 45-46.

⁸ Bridge, "The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, 1900–18", p. 45.

burden of war. It supported Ottoman units with howitzer and mortar batteries, motorized units, and medical teams. Military technical personnel and ski instructors were deployed to assist the Ottoman Army on the front.⁹

The visit by Emperor Karl and Empress Zita between 19 and 21 May 1918 in Istanbul was another demonstration of the significance accredited by the Austria-Hungarian Empire.¹⁰ In return, Ottomans paid back by sending their elite soldiers to the European battlefronts and the Romanian Front was one of them.

Romanian Front

Russian forces under the command of General Brusilov started an offensive against the Austrian army in June to reduce German pressure on Verdun on the 320 km front line from Poland to the Romanian border. The Russians succeeded in a 50 km wide breakthrough and took over 100,000 prisoners. The combined German and Austro-Hungarian forces and the Southern Army under the command of Von Bothmer could hardly stop the Russian offensive. When Russia once more occupied Galicia, the Austrians suffered a heavy defeat. This last vital effort of the Russian Army in the war had important consequences. One of the results is that Romania joined the war on the side of the Entente and attacked Hungary. It was the promise of Transylvania that brought Romania into war. As Romania entered the war on 17 August 1916, it declared war against Austria-Hungary on 27 August 1916. Brusilov withdrew Russian units soon after Allied armies defeated and invaded Romania.¹¹

It was decided to attack Romania with the forces leaving the other allied fronts (German, Austrian, Bulgarian, Turkish). Meanwhile, General Mackenzie took command of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian,

⁹ Bridge, "The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, 1900–18", p. 45-46.

¹⁰ <https://filmmirasim.ktb.gov.tr/en/film/austro-hungarian-emperors-visit-to-istanbul-04>, (accessed 04.08.2023).

¹¹ B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War*, (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1973), p. 207, 209, 297; Fikri Güleç, *Birinci Dünya Harbi VII nci Cilt Avrupa Cepheleri 2 nci Kısım (Romanya Cephesi)*, (Ankara: Gnkur. Basımevi, 1967), p. 12-13; "Romania, more than any other, balanced between East and West; and, remote from the Reich, was not troubled even by German domination of the Habsburg Monarchy. She intended to acquire Habsburg territory and then to jump back on to the anti-Russian side, a policy which she had started almost in her cradle." A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, p. 237.

and Turkish troops on the Danube and Dobruca border on 28 August 1916. After Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary, the Allies demanded three more divisions from Enver Pasha who then approved this request. Thus, on 29 August, the Ottoman Empire and Germany, and then on 1 September, Bulgaria declared war on Romania. Under the command of Mustafa Hilmi Pasha, the completion of the transfer of the 6th Corps consisting of the 15th, 25th, and 26th Divisions to the front ended on 6 October 1916.¹²

This Corps reached the battlefield with the 24 cm Mortar battery number 9 and the 15 cm Howitzer battery number 36, which had previously been sent by Austria-Hungary to the Ottoman Empire. These batteries were under the command of the 26th Ottoman Division. The 177th Infantry Regiment was formed to be placed under the command of the 11th German Army. The regiment held 3598 people, 440 animals, six heavy machine guns, four cannons, and 13 cars. Although the preparation was completed on 28 November 1916, the transportation could only be carried out at the end of December due to transportation difficulties. On 3 December 1916, the Allied Danube Army under the command of General Mackenzie defeated the Romanian forces by the Arges River, and Bucharest was captured after the movement of the army continued by expanding into Romania. Afterwards, the Central Powers continued their operations in Romania. In the meantime, the troops in Dobruja reached the mouth of the Danube. Other units advanced as far as the Seret River towards the end of 1916. Although the Central Powers offered a ceasefire and peace on 12 December 1916, this offer was not accepted. In addition, Wilson, who was re-elected as the President of the United States, mediated a peace proposal on 18 December, which was also rejected. The Dobruja Operation was completed on 5 January 1917, and the Ottoman troops there mostly moved to Wallachia. With the rapid end of the wars in Romania and the capture of Bucharest, many Ottoman troops began to return to the Ottoman Empire in the spring of 1917. In April 1917, the transfer of the 26th Division to Istanbul began. The 6th Corps also left the front gradually. First, the 25th Division returned to Istanbul between 4 and 25 December 1917. The 15th Division, on the other hand, started its transportation in İbrail on 13 May 1918 with its first convoy and gradually transferred to Constanta. From here, the division was taken to Batumi in five phases on

¹² Fikri Güleç, *Birinci Dünya Harbi VII nci Cilt Avrupa Cephesleri 2 nci Kısım (Romanya Cephesi)*, p. 11-14.

the ferries. The logistics and service units that remained in Romania started to move towards Istanbul slowly by sea. The total loss of Turkish troops in these battles was 2,637 people, including 412 martyrs, 1,620 wounded, and 605 missing. Thus, the 6th Turkish Army Corps, which had successful results on the Romanian front for almost two years, left Romania.¹³

Conclusion

Considering itself an independent Great Power, Austria-Hungary declared war against Serbia to reassert its position which then terminated both greatness and independence.¹⁴ As Austria-Hungary hoped to “destroy” Serbia in 1914, instead got real fighting with the Serbian army, which removed the Austrian army from their mainland and overran Hungary.

Similarly, the Romanian Front was also one of the results of the military misconduct of the Austrian Army due to the success of the Brusilov offensive.

As a result of the efforts of Enver Pasha, who said “I do not want to be a burden to our German and Austrian friends, I just want to help them with all my strength” and who believed that the outcome of the First World War would be achieved in Central Europe, distinguished troops, weapons, equipment, and ammunition were deployed to Central Europe. After the deployment, the decrease in combat power was to be seen more clearly. The troops sent to the European fronts were not enough and they were also equipped with the most valuable weapons, tools, and equipment, most of

¹³ Hasan Keskin, 1914-1918 Osmanlı/Avusturya-Macaristan İmparatorluğu İlişkileri, Master Thesis, (Hatay: Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, 2006), p. 65-66; “Romania, sympathetic to the Entente cause, had been waiting a favourable opportunity to enter the war on their side, and Brusilov’s success encouraged her to take plunge. Her command hoped that this, combined with the Allied pressure on the Somme and at Salonika, would fix the German reserves. But Romania’s situation had many inherent defects. The strategical position of her territory was bad, the main section, Wallachia, being sandwiched between Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria. Her army, though externally of a modern pattern, had grave weakness beneath the surface. Of her Allies, only Russia could give her direct aid, and they failed her. And, with all these handicaps, she launched an offensive into Transylvania, which bared her flank to Bulgaria.”, B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War*, p. 209-210; Fikri Güleç, *Birinci Dünya Harbi VII nci Cilt Avrupa Cephesi 2 nci Kısım (Romanya Cephesi)*, p. 12-14.

¹⁴ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918 A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, p. 233.

which were supplied by other armies. More importantly, such deployment caused irreparable results that would endanger the defense of Anatolia in the following years. While this was the case and there was no responsibility or obligation in the alliance agreement signed with the Germans in 1914 - on the contrary, the allies should have helped the Ottoman Empire when necessary-, with the personal considerations of Deputy Commander-in-Chief Enver Pasha, sending Turkish forces to the European Fronts, in 1917 and 1918 the Turkish armies on our fronts were not able to be augmented, replenished and reinforced. It was one of the reasons why the Turkish armies got into and stuck in difficult situations.

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A TROUBLESOME ALLIANCE IN A COALITION WAR: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE BELLIGERENCE WITH ROMANIA (1916-1918)

Claudiu-Lucian TOPOR*

Abstract

The war on the Romanian front stood from the beginning under the sign of a coalition confrontation, with armies of different profiles taking part in it. In August 1916, the Central Powers responded to Romania's declaration of war by sending combat formations with an uneven level of training. The differences deriving from origins and provenance also affected the cultural profile and the confessional orientation of the combatants. Many questions remain about the cohesion of these military forces. Just as deep were the contrasts that defined the motivation of combatants faced with the stakes of their military commitment. Two Ottoman divisions arrived on the Romanian front in the fall of 1916. They took part in the battles in Dobruđja (Raşova; Topraisar) under the command of the Bulgarian General Toshev and distinguished themselves in the battles fought under the unforgiving eyes of Field Marshal Mackensen. Of all the enemy forces transferred to the Romanian front, the presence of the Ottoman troops was a surprise due to the absence of a direct provocation that would justify belligerence against the Romanians. Although fraught with conflict in the past, the historical enmity between the two states had softened over the years. The intensity of the territorial disputes between Romania and the Ottoman Empire decreased after the Congress of Berlin (1878) and the two states had not shared a border for almost half a century. The Turkish communities in Romania willingly adapted to the rigors of the Romanian administration and the legal disputes had become less intense after 1880. The Romanian communities in the Ottoman Empire also tried to avoid conflicts with the Ottoman government. The place of disputes had been taken for some time by flourishing trade relations. The Balkan Wars did not create favourable premises for the outbreak of an armed conflict between the two countries,

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while obviously putting stress on bilateral relations. When the Ottoman delegates were not accepted at the peace negotiations in Romania in the summer of 1913, the attitude of the Romanian government raised eyebrows in Constantinople but did not lead to the straining of diplomatic relations. However, three years later, war was again a tool resorted to. It is interesting to outline here the profile of this new Romanian-Ottoman conflict. Going through the available sources, we shall formulate remarks on the political agenda of the Ottoman Empire and the implications of its combat units' participation in the war on the Romanian front, the circumstances of military cooperation between the allies, the treatment received during the conclusion of the peace treaty, the dedication of the Turkish troops on the battlefield, the level of their military training, and the interaction with the civilian population.

Keywords: Battles in Dobrudja, Ottoman Empire, Romania, War Diplomacy, World War I

1. Autumn of 1916. The Declaration of War and the Interruption of Diplomatic Relations

On Wednesday, August 23 / September 5, 1916, Romania's Minister Plenipotentiary in the Hague (Carol M. Mitilineu, son of the diplomat Mihail Mitilineu) sent home a telegram through the mediation of the Dutch Foreign Ministry. The document contained a declaration of war by the Ottoman Empire against Romania:

“The Ottoman government has required me -he wrote in the telegram- to inform your Excellency that, given that Romania has declared war on Austria-Hungary, which is an ally of Turkey, the aforementioned government considers itself in a state of war with the Romanian government as of August 30 (New Style – N. S. from here onwards), 8 pm. Having no instructions, I asked the ambassador of the United States of America to provisionally protect Romanian interests, to which he gave his consent. Kindly allow the first and second interpreters to remain in place in order to supervise the Legation Archive.”¹

¹ [AMAE] Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al României / Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. Fonds 71/1914. Declarations of war. Decoded telegram sent from The Hague, 23 August/5 September 1916, leaf 265.

Simultaneously with the dispatch of the telegram from the Hague, the official notice of the Turkish government (signed by Khalil Bey) requested the Romanian Plenipotentiary Minister to provide information regarding the number and positions occupied by the members of the diplomatic mission in order to provide them with passports for repatriation.² The event in Vienna had taken the Ottoman authorities by surprise. Romania's declaration of war against Austria-Hungary had been known in Constantinople since September 28 (N. S.). However, the news of the war arrived in an almost serene atmosphere. Constantin G. Manu (Romania's Minister Plenipotentiary) was not at his post at the time. Emanuel Rosetti Roznovanu (one of the Legation Secretaries) had taken over his prerogatives during his leave. The latter presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emanoil Porumbaru and it was his best analysis of the evolution of the political crisis. Initially, there were no signs of war on the horizon. What reasons could there have been for a declaration of war? The alleged détente in Romanian politics had been praised in Constantinople. The Turkish press had written about the "victories" of the pacifist party in Bucharest. Khalil Bey had openly stated that Turkey approved of Romania's policy of definitive neutrality and added that the defeat of the Central Powers entailed the division of the Ottoman Empire, and therefore the fate of Turkey was inevitably linked to that of Germany. If Romania allied itself with the Entente powers, the imperial government would have to include Romania among its enemies, but the warning was in vain. Events precipitated very shortly. On August 29 (N. S.) the Council of Ministers of Turkey declared war with Romania. The notification to the Romanian government was made (as I have shown above) the next day (August 30) through Nederland's diplomats. The protection of the interests of Romanian subjects in Turkey remained under discussion, a mission that (in the absence of instructions) was provisionally entrusted to the American embassy. The two dragomans (translators) of the Romanian Legation (Alphonse Lahaille and Epaminonda Papacosta) remained in Constantinople as attachés to the United States embassy, in charge of overseeing the Legation's Archive, as requested in the telegram sent by Mitilineu (the Minister in the Hague). The procedures specific to the moment were then followed. Before leaving the Ottoman capital,

² Ibid. Report by Em. Rosetti Roznovanu to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Em. Porumbaru, Bucharest, 27 September/10 October 1916, leaf 116 and next.

Roznovanu burned the cypher of the diplomatic correspondence (which had been entrusted to him for the period of Minister Manu's absence) and, in the presence of the American delegates, sealed the gates of the Chancellery, the Legation premises, and the entrance to the Consulate General. Part of the Legation's service staff was mandated (officially and privately) to ensure the maintenance of the buildings under the supervision of the United States Embassy. On the morning of September 4 (N. S.), Romania's diplomatic mission left Constantinople in an atmosphere of perfect courtesy. Even as they prepared for departure, the staff of the mission received the full support of the Ottoman authorities, in the spirit of the most hospitable traditions of the Ottoman Empire. The members of the Legation were able to move freely in the streets, they visited the Grand Vizier to say their goodbyes, and they were received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and by other officials in an atmosphere of cordiality. The elegance went so far that Khalil Bey made a train carriage available for the diplomatic mission for the journey from Constantinople to Sofia. Unfortunately, the treatment received from the Bulgarian authorities was quite different. Although a transit agreement for Romania's diplomatic mission had been negotiated between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, upon their arrival in Sofia, the Romanian officials' luggage and official documents were detained and the Legation's staff remained captive for four hours in a low-grade hotel, under the guard of a soldier with bayonet on the rifle.³

The repatriation of the Romanian mission was finally done by detours through Germany. At the request of the Romanian authorities, intrigued by Bulgaria's hostile attitude, they interrupted the trip of Baron von dem Bussche Haddenhausen (the German Plenipotentiary in Bucharest) just before crossing the border between Russia and Sweden. Thus, Romania's diplomatic missions in the enemy states first met in Berlin and from there, they were to return to Romania following the route of the German Plenipotentiary through Russia. On September 8 (N. S.), Bussche's train could not yet leave the Tornio border point because not all the Romanian diplomatic missions had arrived in Berlin.⁴ The journey of

³ Ibid.

⁴ [ANR] Arhivele Naționale ale României / National Archives of Romania. Microfilm collection, Germany (RFG), reel nr. 9. Horngren to Beldiman, Stockholm, 8 September 1916, c. 848. Similar to the case of the Austro-Hungarian diplomats, details in N.B.

the diplomatic mission from Constantinople was therefore diverted through Austria, where it again faced the same dreadful conditions (food and accommodation did not meet even at the most basic standards). In Germany, they reached Putbus (in Mecklenburg-Pommern) on the island of Rügen, where they were taken to a hotel devoid of any comfort, amid the booing of a group of schoolchildren. The members of the Romanian mission were then kept under armed watch for almost 10 days as a response to the outraging of the German Plenipotentiary and detained at the border between Sweden and Russia. Then the Romanian mission left Putbus for Stockholm, where Roznovanu submitted a note of protest to Djevad Bey (the Ottoman minister) to inform the imperial government of the insults suffered by the Romanian diplomats in Bulgaria despite the assurances so kindly offered upon their departure from Constantinople.⁵

On the other hand, the departure of the Turkish diplomatic mission from Bucharest took place on August 21/September 3, 1916, at 10:00 in the morning and they left in a train from the North Station, which had been specially organised for the transport of the German Legation. That train had eight first-class carriages with 20 seats, six second-class carriages with 70 seats, a lounge car, two restaurant cars and three luggage cars. Along with the 117 employees of the German diplomatic and consular corps, 33 people from the Turkish diplomatic mission, headed by Abdullatif Safa (Sefa Bey), the Minister Plenipotentiary in Bucharest and a diplomat with Albanian origins, were also travelling on this special train. Sefa Bey (the last Ottoman Plenipotentiary before the war) had arrived in Bucharest in 1908 at the age of 40. It had seemed like a good choice for those times. He was an honest and kind man, who stayed away from intrigues and a friend of the Romanians. His Romanian counterpart in Constantinople (Constantin Manu) appeared to the public as a respected diplomat who had accumulated much experience. He had been appointed as Head of the Legation at the end of 1912, during a turbulent period for the Ottoman Empire when the Balkan War had not yet ended. Manu had spent three years (his credentials were presented to the sultan in February 1913) in the Ottoman capital but had not distinguished himself there through anything

Cantacuzino, *Amintirile unui diplomat roman / The Memories of a Romanian Diplomat*, ed. Adrian Angheliescu, (Iași: Apollonia, 1994), pp. 104-109.

⁵ AMAE, fonds 71/1914. Declarations of war. Em. Rosetti Roznovanu to Em. Porumbaru. Bucharest, 27 September/10 October 1916, leaf 116 and next.

special. Always with an eye to society life, he had had no qualms about relinquishing his active role in the activity of the Legation to the military attaché. The military attaché (Lucian Trantomir) had sent regular reports regarding the Ottoman army to Bucharest. With the help of these reports, Romanian decision-makers had obtained comprehensive information about the evolution of hostilities on the war fronts in Europe and the immediate effects that concerned Romania.⁶

2. The Origins of the Belligerence: Political Entanglements behind the Alliance

Beyond its diplomatic aspects, the Romanian-Turkish belligerence of 1916 did not originally have a historical importance. Among the combat forces transported to the Romanian front by the Central Powers, the presence of the Turkish divisions was probably a surprise, because the historical rivalries were thought to be extinguished. It appeared almost unjustified. The territorial disputes between Romanians and Turks were ended after the Berlin Congress (1878). The two countries had not had a common border for almost half a century. The Turkish communities in Romania had adapted to the requirements of a tolerant Romanian administration and even the intensity of legal disputes had decreased after 1880. The most complete census of the population in Romania (the 1899 census) ranked the Turkish community second among the foreign communities of the Old Kingdom (23,756 Ottoman subjects, comprising almost 4% of the population) far behind the Austro-Hungarian community (108,285 citizens comprising 18.2% of the population).⁷ The Romanian administration also intensively sought to discourage emigration. In 1909, the Turkish-language newspaper “*Türk Birliği*” praised the religious freedoms granted to the Muslim communities in Dobrudja (where over 300 mosques existed; numerous religious leaders were paid by the government etc.) and signalled the opening of a Muslim Seminary in Babadag, which

⁶ Silvana Rachieru, “The “1916” Moment from the Perspective of the Ottoman-Romanian Relations – an Overview”, *“The Unknown War” from Eastern Europe. Romania between Allies and Enemies*, ed. Claudiu-Lucian Topor, Alexandru Rubel, (Iași-Konstanz: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 2016), pp. 86-87.

⁷ Silvana Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat. Relații româno-otomane între anii 1878 și 1908 / Ottoman diplomats and subjects in the Old Kingdom. Romanian-Ottoman relations between 1878 and 1908*, (Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2018), pp. 194-195.

was later moved to Medgidia.⁸ Unfortunately, this situation was not reflected in reciprocity for a while. At the beginning of the 20th century, the fate of the Aromanians in Macedonia depended on the hesitations of the Ottoman Porte in recognizing their national identity. Sultan Abdulhamid II could improve their legal condition by a simple decree that would place them on an equal footing with the other non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, in terms of civil rights. Eventually, the *Îrade* (decree) was granted in 1905, after almost four years of delay, which prompted the Romanian Minister in Constantinople (Alexandru Em. Lahovary) to draft an ultimatum. The document contained four mandatory requirements (including the formal recognition of the nationality of the Aromanians within the Turkish empire) and a fixed date by which they had to be resolved (by May 10/23, Romania's national day). Frantically supported by the German Ambassador (Baron Marschall von Bieberstein), Minister Lahovary threatened that if the demands were not met, he would leave Constantinople, putting the Legation in the care of George Derussi. The events of 1905 really risked a compromising situation in the cordial relations between Romania and Turkey. Fortunately, the worst was avoided and, in the end, the tension de-escalated. For a while, flourishing commerce took the place of political disputes. Of course, a political alliance was not formed, despite the persistence of the Ottoman side. At the end of the Second Balkan War, during a meeting between Talaat Bey (Minister of the Interior at the time) and Tache Ionescu during a meeting in Constantinople (and in the cabin of a Romanian ship), the scenario of an alliance was also discussed. Macedonian Romanian Nicolae Batzaria, a leading figure in the entourage of the Young Turks, also attended this meeting. He reported that Tache Ionescu had gladly received Talaat's proposal to support the Ottoman perspective in Athens regarding a possible agreement between the Greeks and Turks at the end of the Second Balkan War, but as far as the alliance was concerned, Ionescu had his reservations and showed hesitation. Batzaria notes that Tache Ionescu found an answer that would not commit him to anything and at the same time would not upset Talaat Bey too much.⁹ Neither a consular convention nor a military agreement was concluded during that time. But even without these

⁸ Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din istoria turcilor dobrogeni / From the History of the Turks in Dobruđja*, (București: Editura Kriterion, 1994), p. 82.

⁹ Nicolae Batzaria, *Din lumea Islamului / From the World of Islam*, (București: Profile Publishing, 2003), pp. 173-175.

instruments, cooperation manifested itself permanently, successfully overcoming the crisis of the Balkan Wars. Indeed, at the time, no one was thinking about military confrontation, not even the most zealous politicians. When the Ottoman delegates were not accepted at the peace negotiations in Bucharest in the summer of 1913, the gesture of the Romanian government produced a new way of cooling of diplomatic relations, but the gesture was not enough to interrupt them completely! The arguments that justified the call to arms were political. The Great War turned out to be a war of coalitions. Many nations without direct rivalries found themselves simply thrown into the maelstrom of conflict. The Ottoman Empire's alliance with the Central Powers also had a ricochet effect on Romanian-Ottoman relations. The German influence was strongly manifested during the years of war at the Sublime Porte. Talaat Pasha had told Henry Morgenthau (the American Minister in Constantinople) in all frankness that it was only fear that was pushing Turkey into an alliance with Germany. If Germany won the war (and Talaat, the future Grand Vizier, had no doubts about that) and Turkey did not help her win, then the Kaiser would have his revenge. Talaat concluded that the nations could not afford any emotions -gratitude, hatred or affection-; only one factor could guide their actions: cold-blooded politics.¹⁰

In Bucharest, as well, German influence had been strong until then. But it was the case only while King Carol I lived and reigned. After the death of the sovereign, the Romanian government oriented the country's policy in a different direction. Contrary to Talaat Pasha's beliefs, Ion I. C. Brătianu (prime minister at the time) thought that emotions could sometimes influence political decisions. From the beginning of the war, Brătianu knew that Romania would fight alongside the Entente powers. The reason seemed simple (although it was complicated). He was pushed towards the Entente by the call of Transylvania (the soul of the Romanian nation). This is what he told his son (the future historian Gh. Brătianu), in a conversation on August 8, 1916:

“We can say that Mihai (our note: Mihai the Brave, Voivode of Muntenia 1593-1601) ruled over the three Romanian countries - Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania- for a brief period), opened

¹⁰ Henry Morgenthau, *Ambasador la Constantinopol - Memorii /Ambasador to Constantinople - Memoirs*, (București, Ararat, 2000), p. 131.

the way for us, that he was a forerunner and a preparer of today's times. Besides, it is an almost general rule in nature that whoever works on something is oblivious. Does the jeweller always [realize] the beauty of the jewel he is carving? The kings of France of old did not realize that by gathering estates and patches of land under their rule they formed the French nation of today."¹¹

Romania's neutrality always tilted towards the Entente powers. In the autumn of 1914 (before the government in Constantinople decided to enter the war), a dispute broke out regarding the transit passage of German ammunition to Turkey. Emil Costinescu (the Romanian Finance Minister) firmly opposed the transit of Turkish ammunition, in response to the ban on the export of German armaments to Romania. The Romanian government's decision was upsetting. To defend himself against the accusations, Brătianu made it clear that he did not control the situation all alone. However, as he would tell Poklewsky-Koziell (Russia's Minister Plenipotentiary in Romania), Brătianu himself opposed the transit of ammunition to the Turks (with the risk of entering the war), because he realized what kind of advantages this had to offer to the Entente.¹²

Various other workarounds were then sought for this problem: Smuggling, corruption of Romanian customs officials, and even transport by Zeppelin airships, despite the risk of such an aircraft crashing. However, nothing could replace transit by rail and through Romanian seaports. That is why the transit of ammunition became not only the subject of negotiations but also of threats as Turkey was preparing for war. In the beginning, the concessions crept in. But they did so very timidly. Through the voice of Baron von dem Bussche, Germany declared that it expected a benevolent neutrality from Romania. Benevolent neutrality meant permission for the transit of ammunition to Turkey.¹³ Over time, the

¹¹ Gheorghe A. Dabija, *Pregătirea diplomatică a războiului României (1914-1916) / Diplomatic preparations for Romania's War (1914-1916)*, ed. Vasile Popa and Petre Otu, (București: Editura Militară, 2019), pp. 409-410.

¹² *Intrarea României în Primul Război Mondial. Negocierile diplomatice în documente din arhivele ruse 1914-1916 / Romania's entry into the First World War. Diplomatic negotiations in documents from the Russian archives 1914-1916*, ed. Vadim Guzun, (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2016), pp. 282-283.

¹³ [PA AA] Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin. R 1876. Bukarest den 16. Juni 1915, S. 32.

situation in Turkey (dependent on German arms supplies) became dramatic. It was feared that the Turkish troops at Gallipoli might be forced to give up their heroic fight if they did not receive more ammunition. The loss of control of the Straits and the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Entente would have strengthened Russia's power over the states bordering the Black Sea. The path of concessions was changed into the path of pressures. As the lack of munitions endangered the Turkish holding of the Dardanelles, the rhetoric of German diplomacy took on more threatening forms. Emperor Wilhelm II wrote a long letter to King Ferdinand in which the Emperor asked the King to order the removal of obstacles to the transport of ammunition to Turkey. If Romania really aspired to the status of a great power after the war, it would have been regrettable if the government in Bucharest no longer allowed the transit of Turkish ammunition, thus sealing the fate of the Dardanelles and shattering all hope regarding the future enlargement of the country after having promised benevolent neutrality in the time of the late King Carol I.¹⁴

Lacking safe solutions, Germany reoriented its strategy. Berlin planned a decisive military strike against Serbia. All kinds of advantages could come from this attack. Unblocking the access route to Turkey was easier if Serbia was subordinated and Bulgaria was brought into the war. Romania was thus losing an important strategic battle; however, it was the one that it had never been interested in winning. Romania's potential military cooperation with the Central Powers remained a definitively closed topic. Only the hypothesis of a definitive neutrality remained valid. But this was already appearing as a weak alternative to maintaining peace in the Balkans.

3. The Military Operations: Turkish Forces on the Romanian Front

The armies of the Central Powers coalition were not exactly unknown to the Romanian military commands. The authorities had received timely information about the fighting capacity of the armies from which some would have expected military cooperation rather than a war. The reports of Lucian Trantomir (Romania's Military Attaché) arrived regularly from Constantinople. Trantomir had spent two of the three years

¹⁴ Ibid. R 1878. Wilhelm II to King Ferdinand, S. 85-87.

of his mission in Constantinople, a city confronted with the realities of war from the start. As early as April 1913, he had informed Bucharest about the military situation of the Ottoman Empire. Once Turkey entered the war, Trantomir began to write even more about enlistments, the production of armaments (the *Tophane* factory), and the situation of the hospitals for the wounded, etc.¹⁵ However, the absence of an immediate danger most likely meant that the information about the Ottoman army was ignored in Romania for a while. The transfer of Turkish troops to the Romanian front appeared at that time to be a page out of history textbooks. It is likely that the event really took some Romanian decision-makers by surprise. Few would have expected to see the Turks again by the Danube, and yet, that was what happened.

At the beginning of the war, the Ottoman Empire had concentrated the bulk of its army (26 divisions out of a total of 37) around Constantinople and the Dardanelles. The Ottoman General Staff initially authorized only two military operations, both limited: one against the Russians in the Caucasus and the other against the British in Egypt. Enver Pasha and those close to him in the Young Turks Party believed that the military role of the Ottoman Empire was to engage as many Entente troops as possible in the battle to facilitate Germany's successes on other fronts. However, on the other hand, the Turks appeared more willing than their allies to send troops where they were most needed. They believed that through a consistent contribution to the war effort, they would ensure a leading place for their empire in the peace negotiations. When Austria-Hungary requested the support of the allies, because of the losses suffered in the Brusilov offensive, Enver Pasha suggested sending an expeditionary force to Galicia (Halychyna). The proposal came to fruition, despite criticism from the opposition, which was against the involvement of Ottoman troops in the European theatres of war. In the summer of 1916, when Romania had also declared war on Austria-Hungary, the German command requested the support of the Ottoman General Staff. Unlike the commitment to support the Austrian defence in Galicia, Romania's

¹⁵ Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Silvana Rachieru, "Reconstituirea unei biografii: pe urmele atașatului militar al României la Constantinopol – Lucian Trantomir (1913-1916)" / "Reconstructing a biography: in the footsteps of Romania's military attaché in Constantinople - Lucian Trantomir (1913-1916)", *Analele Științifice ale Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași* (ASUI), Vol. LXV, 2019, pp. 535-553.

situation appeared more complex from a military point of view, because it involved an offensive war with troops in constant movement.

Naturally, the dispatch of Turkish divisions north of the Danube also involved cooperation with the Bulgarian commanders. But for the Bulgarians, the Turks were not reliable allies. On the contrary, the Turkish soldiers appeared as the true enemy of the nation and as the past oppressor of the Christians in the Balkans in the eyes of some Bulgarians. The rivalry had been brewing since the Balkan Wars. At a dinner in November 1912, offered to the military attachés in Berlin, Major (at that time) Ganchev stated the following regarding the situation in the Balkans:

“We will not give up until we enter Constantinople and replace the crescent with the cross on top of the Saint Sophia church, and until we completely drive the Turks out of Europe; we will divide the Ottoman Empire among the Balkan countries, then we will create a port in the Aegean Sea, perhaps west of Dedeağaç. We will offer Constantinople to Russia in its position as the protector of Christianity.”¹⁶

Therefore, it seemed strange that the Bulgarians would fight alongside the Turks against the Russians. There was a hidden fear that the presence of the Turks on Bulgarian territory could spark protests against the government and even an uprising. But the Bulgarian decision-makers finally found the optimal solution. Bulgaria received the military support of the Turks but the interpretation of the gesture was that the Ottoman support had, in fact, been intended for the Germans.

Confronted with the Romanian government's decision to intern the country's Muslim civilian subjects (including those who had acquired Romanian citizenship) in prison camps, the General Staff of the Ottoman Army ordered the 5th Army to form an expeditionary force specially prepared for the battles in Romania. The 6th Army Corps (then involved in the defence of the Gallipoli Peninsula) received provisions for the preparation of the operation. Its composition included regiments belonging

¹⁶ [AMR] Arhivele Militare ale României / Military Archives of Romania. Fond Marele Stat Major. Secția Informații / Collection: The Romanian General Staff Collection. Information, file 112/1910. Legațiunea României în Germania. Atașatul militar către șeful Statului Major / Romanian Legation in Germany. Military Attaché to the Chief of Staff. Berlin 5/18 noiembrie 1912, leaf 85.

to two other divisions (the 15th Division with the 38th regiment, the 45th Division, and the 56th and 25th Divisions with the 73rd, 74th, and 75th regiments) whose troops had been detached from other army corps destined for the offensive. The troops underwent a fundamental reorganization, with officers and soldiers selected from other training centres. Both divisions, however, were assigned a large percentage of only half-trained recruits (either very young or very old) and inadequately equipped for war. The 6th Army Corps was subordinated to the Mackensen Army Group stationed in Tarnovo (in Bulgaria) at the start of the military campaign. Its commander had been appointed as the Turkish General Mustafa Hilmi Pasha. The first units of this army corps (the 75th infantry regiment) arrived in Dobrich on September 7, 1916, shortly after the fall of the Tutrakan fortress (former Turkish fortress) into the hands of the Bulgarian army.¹⁷

At first, the units of the 6th Turkish Army Corps had to face the resistance of the troops of the new Army of Dobrudja under the command of the Russian General Andrey Zayonchkovskiy. But what had actually happened? By the end of September, the Romanian Army Command had shifted the bulk of forces to Dobrudja to reverse the situation there. The 2nd, 5th, 12th, and 15th Divisions came from Transylvania, joining the 9th and 19th Divisions which were already in Zayonchkovskiy's Dobrudja Army. On top of these, the Russian general had his own Russian divisions (the 1st Cavalry and the 61st and 115th Infantry Divisions) and the Serb Division. At the end of the month, the 3rd Rifle Division arrived from Russia, giving Zayonchkovskiy an army of eleven divisions, almost three times larger than the forces facing him.¹⁸ Despite the numerical superiority, the strategy of the Russian commander was dominated by the principle of retreat. After the fall of the Tutrakan fortress south of the Danube, the Romanian troops initially retreated close to the old border with Bulgaria (the border before 1913). However, on September 14, 1916, Zayonchkovskiy ordered a new regrouping of the Romanian-Russian forces on a defensive line located near the Rasova-Cocargea-Cobadin-

¹⁷ Mesut Uyar, "The Ottoman Empire and the War with Romania", *Die unbekannt Front. Der Erste Weltkrieg in Rumänien*, ed. Gundula Gahlen, Deniza Petrova, Oliver Stein, (Berlin: Campus Verlag, 2018), p. 188-192.

¹⁸ Michael B. Barrett, *Prelude to Blitzkrieg. The 1916 Austro-German Campaign in Romania*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p. 145.

Topraisar-Tuzla alignment (the last town located only 18 kilometres from Constanța). The soldiers' morale was down. Suffering from dysentery and exhausted by the forced marches in the last few weeks, many of them threw away their knapsacks and weapons, including the precious machine guns. Unlike Zayonchkovskiy's Mackensen's strategy was an offensive one. The German commander was anxious to exploit the retreat of the Romanian troops from the south of Dobrudja with an immediate offensive that would cause a decisive defeat on this segment of the front. But the Bulgarians were then moving more slowly. Their desire to stop and loot the Romanian villages could hardly be restrained. Moreover, the Bulgarian Commander, General Stephan Toshev, disapproved of the strategy of a general offensive because of the reinforcements received by the enemy. Toshev did not have much confidence in the support of the newly sent Turkish troops, given their poor training.¹⁹ His fears had a kernel of truth. Mackensen had recorded in his notes that some of the troops sent by Enver Pasha in the battles against Romania had come half-trained, without weapons, and with the appearance of civilians. The Germans, however, could provide them uniforms, weapons, horses, and everything that might be necessary for modern mobile troops.²⁰ It was amazing how quickly the Turkish recruits learned. The German officers had been really impressed by the tenacity with which the Turkish troops had fought at Gallipoli despite the constant suffering (starvation, epidemics, etc.).²¹ Mackensen had also found words of praise:

“I had known – he wrote in his notes – the Turkish soldiers since my first presence in the sultan's empire in 1898 as docile instruments in the hands of their leaders, completely devoted to duty and coping with deprivations. The Turks' trust of Germany, their decency and honour appealed to me. Repaying the trust of the Germans is for most Turks more than an order from the caliph. More than in other armies, their attitude in battle depends on the

¹⁹ Glenn Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial / Romania in the First World War*, (București: Meteor Publishing, 2014), pp. 94-97.

²⁰ August von Mackensen, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen des Generalfeldmarschalls aus Krieg und Frieden*, (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1938), p. 289.

²¹ Holger Herwig, *The First World War. Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918*, (Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 157.

officers. The Turkish soldier is not suited to just any theatre of war. But once sent to the right post he fights to the end.”²²

In the last week of September, the Bulgarian troops in Dobrudja went on the defensive and the Romanian troops were preparing for a large-scale counter-offensive: the Flămânda Maneuver. The idea belonged to the Romanian General Averescu. The maneuver entailed a two-pronged attack in Dobrudja. It involved a strong offensive by the Army of Dobrudja reinforced in the East and a surprise attack that involved crossing the Danube south of Bucharest (Flămânda, a village in the Danube plains, where the width of the river was suitable for building a pontoon bridge) and launched by a battle group consisting of five Romanian divisions (the South Army Group under the command of Averescu had the 128 battalions that formed the Army of Dobrudja and 58 battalions of the 3rd Army on the Danube).²³

The Romanian divisions began to cross the Danube on 1 October and Zayonchkovskiy simultaneously launched his offensive with the VI Corps (actually the 25th Division and the 56th Regiment) bearing the brunt of the attacks. For six days, Mustafa Hilmi Pasha attempted to manage the crisis with limited manpower and fire support. His units wavered several times and he blocked the Romanian penetrations with token Bulgarian soldiers and 15th Division battalions, which had just arrived after a tiring journey. The Ottoman units succeeded in holding the position but took heavy losses. They suffered more than 5000 casualties, one-fifth of whom were killed in action. Mackensen ordered a general advance against the Romanian-Russian defence line, which stretched from Rashova to Topraisar. The 6th Corps, as the main driver of the assault, began its advance as part of a western wing under the command of General Toshev on 19 October. The Ottoman units encountered stiff resistance and the neighbouring Bulgarian units could not advance but Mustafa Hilmi Pasha managed to penetrate the defence line the following day. Zayonchkovskiy ordered a general retreat to several Romanian units behind the Constanța-Cernavodă line on 21 October. The pursuit turned into a race between the Ottomans, Bulgarians, and Germans. Constanța fell on 22 October and Cernavoda fell two days later. The Ottoman units continued to play an

²²August von Mackensen, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen des Generalfeldmarschalls aus Krieg und Frieden*, p. 289.

²³ Glenn Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, pp. 97-100.

important role during the follow-up operations. Rain and poor road conditions effectively ended the pursuit in the last days of November, with von Mackensen later acknowledging that the VI Corps had won the race. However, success came at a price, with the corps suffering 5000 casualties.²⁴

After the failure of the Flămânda Maneuver, the danger from the Danube was removed for General von Mackensen. The general now could calmly think about the next hit. This would be the battle for Walachia. Its end could be equivalent to the occupation of Bucharest. In order to fulfil this great goal, Mackensen needed -in addition to the training of subordinate troops- the participation of the German 9th Army, which had succeeded in breaking through the resistance of the Romanians in the Carpathian passes. Both requirements were met. German General Robert Kosch's LII Army Corps (designated to lead the attack on the Danube crossing) consisted of five divisions: the German 217th Infantry Division, the Bulgarian 1st Infantry Division and the Bulgarian 12th Infantry Division, a mixed cavalry division under the command of the German General Karl von der Goltz, and the Turkish 26th Infantry Division (73rd, 76th, and 78th regiments) transferred to Romania at the insistence of Enver Pasha (Minister of War). In front of these troops stood the Romanian Army Group "Apărătorii Dunării", which was made up of the 18th Infantry Division, consisting of militias and cavalry brigades that had to cover a distance of 218 kilometres. In particular, the battalions in the 56-kilometre sector where Zimnicea was located (Shishtov on the Bulgarian side of the river) were poorly organized and ineffectively trained. The Romanian High Command had been caught completely off-guard. All indications of a surprise attack from the enemy had been blithely ignored. Kosch's forces embarked on the night of November 22/23, 1916 and crossed the Danube unhindered. The weak reaction of the Romanians did not bother the German commander at all. The German 217th Infantry Division led the attack, moving towards Bucharest, and Goltz's cavalry moved towards Alexandria, where they met Schmettow's forces (the German 6th Cavalry Division) on November 27. The 1st Bulgarian Infantry Division then occupied Giurgiu. The Ottoman 26th Infantry Division (included in the reserve troops) crossed the Danube two days later (November 25). It entered the fight in the decisive battle for Bucharest, participating in the

²⁴ Mesut Uyar, "The Ottoman Empire and the War with Romania", pp. 190-191.

attack against the 2/5 Romanian Infantry Division (Commander Alexandru Socec) on the morning of December 3, 1916 (along with the Bavarians and Goltz's cavalry). The Romanians stood their ground until past noon but then fell victim to exhaustion and demoralization under the rain of projectiles that made the ground shake. Unable to control the troops, Commander Socec ordered a general retreat.²⁵ Together with the allies, the Turks emerged victorious. But it was at the cost of over 3000 victims this time. The advance of the division then continued in pursuit of the Romanian troops. Even after the fall of Bucharest (December 6, 1916), these units remained on the offensive. On January 4, 1917, the advance of the Turkish troops stopped, and the division under the command of the VI Army Corps was stationed just before the Siret valley where the Romanian frontline had stabilized in front of the Russian lines.²⁶

A dark curtain suddenly fell over the shadows of a war that left too much suffering in people's hearts anyway. After gruelling marches, the Turkish soldiers were jubilant at the thought of their long-awaited victory. However, they were not well received in the capital. According to Virgiliu Drăghiceanu, Secretary of the Commission of Historical Monuments and corresponding member of the Academy, the Turks appeared like effigies that seemed to have been picked up from the dusty shelves of the Janissary museum in Constantinople.²⁷ Witnessing the parade of enemy troops, Constantin Bacalbașa, a journalist of the era, wrote with obvious irony:

“The Turks have nothing characteristic; their army is an army without will, you see it as a docile instrument in the hands of the German command. The Turks sneak modestly and timidly among the passers-by, you never hear their voice, never a complaint is made wherever they go. Our former sovereigns for centuries are aware of their end as a dominant race. Now degenerate in the European environment, how remote must they be from the warrior race, which poured over Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries?!”²⁸

²⁵ Glenn Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, p. 162.

²⁶ Mesut Uyar, “The Ottoman Empire and the War with Romania”, p. 192.

²⁷ Virgiliu N. Drăghiceanu, *707 zile sub cultura pummului german / 707 days under German power culture*, ed. I. Oprisan, (București: Saeculum, 2012), p. 58.

²⁸ Constantin Bacalbașa, *Capitala sub ocupația dușmanului 1916-1918 / The capital under enemy occupation 1916-1918*, (București: Saeculum, 2018), p. 60.

The Turks' claims regarding the spoils of war were initially more moderate compared to those of the Bulgarian allies. So was their attitude towards the civilians.²⁹ They requested and commandeered the Sturdza palace, which was used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and which they turned into a hospital for the sick and wounded. Symbolically (referring to the image of the past) they apparently also picked up the two cannons on the left and right of the statue of Mihai the Brave, as well as the one in front of the Guard Corps at the Royal Palace, glorious trophies acquired by the Romanians in the war of 1877.³⁰ On the frontlines, however, things sometimes seemed changeable. Sergeant Rosenberg Hescal (51st Infantry Regiment, 3rd Company, 1913 contingent) stated that he lay on the battlefield wounded for two days, during which time he was the victim of repeated robbery attempts, in which the Turkish soldiers tried to pull the gold teeth from his mouth, after he had been slapped, pickpocketed and punched in the face.³¹

Unfortunately, the Turks' treatment of Romanian prisoners of war also was a regrettable issue. However, the topic can easily be placed in the "sensitive" category, because even the Turks from Romania, who were civilian internees scattered through the villages of Moldova, did not have a much better fate.³² There were two categories in the lists of Romanian prisoners: those captured by the Turks and brought to Turkey by themselves, and those captured by the Germans and sent to Turkey to work in various industries. In total, it seems that approximately 6000 Romanian prisoners arrived in Turkey, of which 4300 were repatriated (the last 16-18 of them, found in internment camps, were sent to Romania by the Entente military

²⁹ For instance, a letter sent from Brăila by General Rudolf Kosch to his wife (15.12.1916) mentioned the robbing of a church and the destruction of icons by the Turkish soldiers. [BAMA] Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, N 754/7, folder 68.

³⁰ Anibal Stoescu, *Din vremea ocupației / from the time of occupation*, (București: Socec, 1927), p. 107. They did the same in the city of Ploiesti where they confiscated the two cannons captured by the Romanians in 1877, which stood next to the Monumentul Vânătorilor for years as a testimony to the sacrifice of the people of Ploiesti in the War of Independence. See, Lucian Vasile, *Ploieștii în Marele Război / Ploiești in the Great War*, (București: AEDU, 2017), p. 52.

³¹ *Calvarul prizonierilor români din primul Război Mondial. Mărturii documentare / The ordeal of Romanian prisoners in World War I. Documentary evidence*, Vol. 3, ed. Gh. Nicolescu, Gh. Dobrescu, A. Nicolescu, (Pitești: Editura Universității, 2006), pp. 337-349.

³² *Tragedii și suferințe neștiute. Prizonieri de război și internați civili în România 1917-1919 / Tragedies and untold suffering. Prisoners of war and civilian internees in Romania 1917-1919*, ed. Andrei Șiperco, (București: Oscar Print, 2003) p. 113 and p. 161.

authorities), and the rest died or disappeared without a trace. However, it should be noted that their maintenance was devoid of difficulties. The testimonies describe them lacking clothes and shoes, being sent to work in the lead mines of Asia Minor, being exposed to the climate of Anatolia (difficult to bear for foreigners), being poorly fed, etc. Except for the assistance of the Romanian Red Cross, which sent some subsidies from Bern through Admiral Gračosky, they were mostly ignored by the Spanish delegates, the country that had taken upon itself the task of protecting Romania's interests in Turkey.³³

4. The Military Occupation: The Bucharest Peace Treaty (1918)

After the battles in Transylvania, Dobrudja and the Walachian Plains, the resistance of the Romanian army collapsed before the arrival of the winter of 1916. General Falkenhayn and the German 9th Army advanced deep into the territory to reach the river Siret before the arrival of Russian reinforcements. The autumn rains and the poor quality of the roads slowed down the advance of the enemy troops, but did not manage to stop their advance. Only five available divisions, most of them without full strength, still ensured the survival of the Romanian military authority on the battlefield, in one of the critical moments of the war. The last important cities, before the lines on the Siret, fell around Christmas. The occupied territory was governed by the victorious coalition. In late 1916, approximately two-thirds of the surface of the Kingdom of Romania was in the hands of the foreign military government. In the territory, the following administrative structures were established: the German Military Administration (Militärverwaltung in Rumänien), the Stage Region of the German 9th Army; Area of Operations of the German 9th Army; The Operation Area of the Bulgarian 3rd Army and the German Stage Administration in Dobrudja. All these newly established structures answered hierarchically to the Mackensen Supreme Command (OKM) installed in Bucharest. 'Militärverwaltung in Rumänien' included, apart from the capital, the five counties of Oltenia/Lesser Walachia (Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Romanati, Vâlcea), the counties of Muntenia / Greater Walachia (Argeș, Dâmbovița, Ilfov, Ialomița, Muscel, Olt, Prahova,

³³ *Calvarul prizonierilor români din primul Război Mondial. Mărturii documentare* Vol. 1. Lieutenant-colonel Gheorghe Polihroniad to the Ministry of War - the General Secretariat. Constantinople, 10/23 February 1919, pp. 307-308.

Teleorman and Vlașca) and represented the ‘headquarters of the German administration in the occupied territory. At the helm of the institution was a military governor, the German infantry general Tülff von Tschepe und Weidenbach. The staff consisted solely of German officials. The allies of the Reich were represented only by plenipotentiaries (Bevollmächtigten), who defended the interests of their states’ subjects in various branches of the military administration.³⁴

From the beginning, the economic stakes of the military occupation influenced the relations between the members of the Central Powers coalition. The ‘Wirtschaftsstab’ (Economic Command) gained supremacy among the structures of the occupation administration. Germany’s allies were primarily interested in the exploitation of natural resources. The Turkish delegates requested that their country be represented on an equal footing in the distribution of the spoils of war. The distribution of fuel and grain stocks stored in Dobruđja was carried out according to the quotas indicated in a convention signed in Sofia on December 2, 1916. Turkey received exclusively the quantities of grain that were stored in the warehouses in Constanța before the document was signed. It had to ensure the transport of goods either by land (as far as possible), or by ensuring satisfactory naval traffic between Constanța and Constantinople (almost an illusion under the circumstances of the era). The monthly fuel quota set for Turkey was 825 tons of gasoline, 1550 tons of oil, 376 tons of motor oil, 300 tons of diesel, and the shipment insurance was the responsibility of the Constanța Stage Administration.³⁵

However, the Bulgarians systematically hindered the transportation of grain to Turkey, and therefore German mediation was necessary. The Turkish delegate attached to the German Stage Administration in Dobruđja (Major Reefet) sent a protest note to the

³⁴ Ilie I. Georgianu, *România sub ocupațiune dușmană / Romania under enemy occupation*, Vol. 2 *Exploatarea economică a țării. Organizația și activitatea Statului Major Economic / Economic exploitation of the country. Organisation and work of the Economic Staff*, (București: Editura “Cultura Neamului Românesc”, 1920); A Berindey, *La situation économique et financière de la Roumanie sous l'occupation Allemande*, These pour Le Doctorat, (Paris, 1921); Gr. Antipa, *L'Occupation Ennemie de la Roumanie et ses conséquences économiques et sociales*, (Paris, PUF, Histoire Économique et Sociale de la Guerre Mondiale).

³⁵ *Denkschrift der Deutschen Etappenverwaltung in der Dobrudscha*. Abgeschlossen Mitte April 1917. Anlage: Abkommen von Sofia vom 2. Dezember 1916, p. 120.

German commander von Ungern, in which he showed how much it was necessary to have a German delegate present when grain from the Constanta warehouses was loaded. His request was granted. The Bulgarians were asked to allow the loading and shipment of Turkish grain exclusively by the German Office of Supply in the Territory (Intendancy Service/Feldproviantamt).³⁶

The German Stage Administration in Dobrudja was apparently not the only one that appreciated the honest cooperation of the Turks. The opinion was shared by the offices of the military government in Bucharest. Osman Nizami (Doğancı) Pasha (lieutenant general) was appointed as Ottoman delegate (Bevollmächtigter) to the Military Administration in Romania. He enjoyed a good reputation in the eyes of the Germans. The illustrated magazine “Rumänien im Wort und Bild” (edited by the German captain L. Volkmann and printed by the State Press in Bucharest)³⁷ devoted a laudatory portrait to him. Osman came from a family with military traditions (he was the son of Marshal Ali Nizami Pasha, the former Chief of the General Staff of the Ottoman Army) and had been familiar with the instructional principles of the German military schools since his youth. We learn, for example, that early on, in 1881, Osman had been included as a young officer in a military mission to Berlin. He proved his military skills on multiple occasions, including by participating in the suppression of the rebellion in Crete (1897). He returned to Berlin in 1908 to take up the post of ambassador, which he had chosen over that of minister of war. After the signing of the London peace treaty (following the first Balkan War), Osman Nizami entered the government as minister of public works. At the outbreak of the Great War (1914), he had been appointed ambassador to Washington but had not taken this position. Military duties kept him in the country, and so he made himself available to the Supreme Command of the Army for various important missions. He was viewed as a reliable friend of Germany. Energetic, resourceful, thrifty. These were the words in which the German publication was wrapping up its praise for the Turkish

³⁶ [DVIA], Duržaven Voennenistoriceski Arhiv Veliko Tarnovo / Bulgarian Military History Archives, collection 740, list 6, (a.e.) 3. Deutsche Ettapenverwaltung in der Dobrudscha. Constanza, den 26. Mai 1917.

³⁷ Ion Bulei, *Un război în cenușa imperiilor / A war in the ashes of empires*, (București: Cadmos, 2010), p. 162.

allied commander. Few others enjoyed similar attention.³⁸ In their turn, the Turks responded accordingly. They always knew how to cultivate an appreciative image in the eyes of the Germans. Especially by not missing any of the festive moments. Gerhard Velburg writes in his diary (January 27, 1918) that the Turks had brought an elite company to the military parade, while the Bulgarians had not attended at all. What is worse, precisely when the emperor's birthday was being celebrated. With Mackensen in attendance.³⁹

The Turkish allies did all they could to avoid a symbolic involvement in the affairs of the military administration. It is hard to say whether they actually succeeded. Certainly, in a political sense, the importance of their co-belligerence acquired more consistency. The peace negotiations in Bucharest offered them the opportunity for substantial involvement. At least in the matter of Dobrudja, they produced a revival. Czernin remembers that the Turks protested vehemently against the assignment of the entire Dobrudja to Bulgaria, especially since Turkey would not have received any compensation in Thrace. Talaat Pasha had openly told the Austro-Hungarian delegate that his government would have to resign if he returned home 'empty-handed' from Bucharest, in which case the break-up of Turkey would become likely.⁴⁰

In order to facilitate the rapprochement of the points of view of Bulgaria and Turkey, Emperor Wilhelm II commissioned Vice Chancellor Karl Helfferich to mediate the tense situation between the two allied countries. However, the German mediation also proved to be complicated. Richard von Kühlmann (the foreign minister of Germany) presented the course of events in detail before the parliament. The issue of Dobrudja was more difficult to articulate on the part of Turkey. The wounds of the last Balkan wars had by no means healed. Resentments persisted in such a way that the two allied countries [Bulgaria and Turkey, our note] remained hostile to each other. Turkey had provided military support in Dobrudja in

³⁸ "Rumänien in Wort und Bild", 1. Jahrgang, no. 17/18, Bukarest 22. und 29. September 1917, p. 11

³⁹ Gerhard Velburg, *În spatele frontului. Marele Război așa cum l-am văzut eu - Decembrie 1916 – iunie 1918 – Însemnările unui soldat german în România ocupată / Behind the front. The Great War as I saw it - December 1916 - June 1918 - The memoirs of a German soldier in occupied Romania*, trans. Ștefan Colceriu, (București, Humanitas, 2018), p. 275.

⁴⁰ Ottokar Czernin, *Im Weltkriege*, (Berlin und Wien: Ullstein, 1919), pp. 363-367.

the hope that it could expect extensive compensation. The focus was on the return of territories that had been strategically abandoned at the beginning of the war as a price for Bulgaria's cooperation. Turkey had made sacrifices by allowing an immediate, quite comprehensive border rectification in Thrace, by which the Bulgarian territory reached the left bank of the Maritza, and the important suburbs of Adrianople, Karagaci became Bulgarian land.

“The Turks - argued Kühlmann - had always lived with the hope that they would succeed in regaining the entire territory ceded to Bulgaria at the time, and they were fighting tooth and nail based on this hope. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, as anyone who has had to negotiate with them knows, are extremely stubborn, and especially the idea of territorial restitution is met with strong opposition.”⁴¹

The dispute threatened to shatter the coalition. It would not be settled before the end of the war. A temporary solution was reached: to cede the Quadrilateral (Southern Dobrudja) to Bulgaria, with the rest of the province coming under the collective possession of the Central Powers.⁴² However, the fate of the war soon changed. Romania (with plenty of luck) managed to regain the entire lost territory. At the end of 1918, Dobrudja had become Romanian again.

Conclusions

The end of the war had a different outcome for the history of the Romanians compared to that of the Turks. The Ottoman Empire was showing signs that the end had come, while Greater Romania was just taking shape on the political stage of history. The eternal difference between the defeated and the victorious. Judging strictly by the facts, it remains difficult to establish the influence exerted by the memories of this war on the destiny of the good relations of the interwar years. The memory

⁴¹ PA AA. R22121. Akten betreffend Friedensverhandlungen mit Rumänien. Vom 20. April 1918 bis 24. April 1918. A.17337/61008. Richard von Kühlmann to the German Parliament. Berlin, den 23. April 1918.

⁴² Dr. Constantin Cheramidoglu, “Dobrogea – mărul discordiei între țările Puterilor Centrale la 1918” / “Dobrogea - the cause of discord between the countries of the Central Powers in 1918”, *Marea Unire de la Marea Neagră / The Great Union and the Black Sea*, Vol. 2, ed. Sorin Marcel Colesniuc, (Constanța, Celebris, 2018), pp. 432-434.

of peoples remains selective. However, the echo of tragedies does not disappear easily. The Germans were left after the war with irreparable damage to their image. Among the Romanians from the generation of the trenches, they were always harshly labelled. The same goes for Hungarians and Bulgarians. Among the enemies of '1916', the image of the Turks seems to have suffered the least. Maybe this was because of their limited involvement in the military campaign, or for reasons that should be investigated in the future. The war between the Turks and the Romanians in 1916 was a product of opposing coalitions. Political coalitions sometimes functioned poorly from a military point of view. Belligerent Romania suffered as a result of the alliance with Russia, just as Turkey found herself in a complicated situation as an ally of Bulgaria. The Romanian language has borrowed a Turkish word to designate such a situation.⁴³ In Romanian, the word 'bucluc' means trouble, and also argument/fight (discord), and it reflects precisely the opposite of what should be the state of mind in an alliance. Far from harmony (concord) and always under tension (almost conflict) with its own allies. This is how the Ottoman belligerence (the last in a long history) against Romania in 1916 can be understood. A fragment of the past that we still have to clarify together. All the more so since, from the Romanians' point of view, the war was reflected in historiography mainly as a war of territorial reunification (predominant in the national sense) and less as a war of coalitions (deficient in the international sense). Here may be the meeting of some productive directions for the rewriting of our common history. A long one, influenced by heroes and their memorable feats.

⁴³ *Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române / Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, (București, Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2009), p. 122.

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THREAT OR FACTOR OF STABILITY? THE PERCEPTION OF ROMANIAN DIPLOMACY ON THE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERWAR TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

One of the main aspects, which Romanian diplomats in Türkiye followed in the interwar period, was the military evolution of the newly founded Republic. Using the reports identified at the Diplomatic Archives of Romania, this paper aims to present how the military modernization process initiated in Ankara was perceived and to analyze the reasons that were the basis of the opinions that Romanian diplomats formulated. Thus, the main aspects that will be explained in this paper will be the perception of the regulation of the military service, the reorganization of the navy, the development of military aviation, military acquisitions, and the organization of military maneuvers. The paper will also refer to a document about the Turkish army drawn up by the Greek Army's General Staff, which was obtained by the Romanian Legation in Athens.

Analyzing the documents drafted by Romanian diplomats in Istanbul and Ankara, three main aspects that determined their perception of military developments in Turkey can be observed. First, they positioned themselves according to the relations that Türkiye had with Romania's allies such as Greece or France. Secondly, they feared a rapprochement of Ankara with the states such as the Soviet Union with which Bucharest had several differences. Thirdly, the positioning towards the endowment of the Turkish army was determined by the level of the relations between the two countries.

Keywords: Demilitarization of the Straits, Greece, Modernization of the army, Romania, Soviet Union, Türkiye.

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Introduction

In the time of interval from the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923 to the outbreak of the Second World War, we could identify two periods in Romanian-Turkish relations. The first period ends with the signing of the *Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Arbitration and Conciliation between the Republic of Türkiye and the Kingdom of Romania* in 1933 and is marked by not only restraint but also efforts, through which the two states tried to find elements favorable to a rapprochement. The second period is characterized by excellent relations and ends with the outbreak of World War II.¹

In this article based on the documents identified at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, I will try to show how the level of relations between Romania and Ankara was reflected in the way the military developments in Türkiye were perceived. The Romanian diplomats stationed in Istanbul or Ankara showed a constant interest towards the endowment and organization of the Turkish army, the status of the Straits, and the military exercises organized by the Turkish General Staff. However, the meanings attributed to them differed.

1. Ankara-Bucharest Relations in the First Years of the Republic and the Romanian Perceptions of the Turkish Military

1.1. Mistrust and “Mystery” in the Turkish Intentions

Until the beginning of the 1930s, Romanian diplomats looked at the reorganization of the Turkish army and the Turkish Government’s arms purchases with reluctance. Their reports show concerns about the intentions of Ankara officials. This anxiety of the Romanian officials was determined by the main objective of the Romanian foreign policy, namely the preservation of the *status quo*. At the beginning of the interwar period, Romania, which had been in the camp of the victors and had managed to unite all its historical provinces after the Versailles Peace Conference, had its contested borders. Thus, securing its borders with neighbors such as Soviet Russia, Bulgaria, and Hungary was a constant of the leaders in Bucharest.²

¹ See Metin Omer, “Romanya-Türkiye İlişkilerinde Göç Perspektifi (1923-1936)”, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi/CTAD: Journal of Modern Turkish History Studies*, No. 30 (2019), pp. 309-332.

² Viorica Moisuc, *Premisele izolării politice a României 1919-1940*, (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1991), p. 53.

Kemalist Türkiye, which had managed to turn the defeat of the First World War into a victory through the *National Struggle*, was in turn concerned with protecting its independence and territorial integrity. A rapprochement between these two states in the early years was prevented by the different strategies they chose to achieve their goals. The Romanian governments saw France and Great Britain as the main guarantors of the Versailles Peace System based on which the Romanian borders had been drawn. Romanian politicians supported the collective initiatives whose purpose was to ensure security. In this sense, they made efforts to make the League of Nations an effective tool and created regional alliances such as the Little Entente.³ The main concern of the Romanian diplomats was the Russo-German rapprochement, which, in the Romanian eyes, could evolve unfavorably to Romanian interests.⁴ In contrast, Türkiye was not a member of the League of Nations, had a dispute with Britain, had disagreements with France, and was the only state in South-Eastern Europe to have cordial relations with the Soviet Union.⁵ That is why the relations between Ankara and Bucharest became close, only after Türkiye solved its problems with Great Britain and France and became a member of the League of Nations.⁶

Also, during the negotiations in Lausanne, the two states had different points of view regarding the issue of the internationalization of the Straits,⁷ the demilitarization of the area located between the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, the establishment of the seat of the Patriarchate in Constantinople, the ownership of the Ada-Kaleh Island, and the future trade conventions. However, there were premises of the rapprochement between Ankara and Bucharest even before the Lausanne negotiations took place. Romania did not give in to British pressure and did not send military

³ Keith Hitchins, *România 1866-1947*, (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2013), p. 497.

⁴ Viorica Moisuc, *Premisele izolării politice a României 1919-1940*, p. 67.

⁵ Constantin Iordan-Sima, “La Turquie kémaliste et l’idée du Pacte Balkanique dans les années 1925-1926”, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, Vol. XIX, No. 2 (1981), p. 312.

⁶ Metin Omer, *İki Dünya Savaşı Arasında Romanya’daki Türk-Tatar Toplumu ve Türkiye’ye Göçler*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2023), pp. 185-187.

⁷ Emanuel Plopeanu, “Romania-Turkish relations in the interwar period: issues, perceptions and solutions. The case of the Black Sea Straits’ regime and Turkish-Tatar emigration”, *Revista Istorică*, Vol. XXIII, No. 5-6 (2012), pp. 433-447.

troops to Istanbul in the summer of 1922.⁸ Later on, during the peace negotiations, Ismet Pasha asked Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes to play the role of mediators between Türkiye and the Great Powers in Lausanne regarding financial issues.⁹ Moreover, during the journey from Lausanne back to Ankara, Ismet Pasha also paid an unofficial visit to Bucharest between February 13 and 14, 1923. In the capital of Romania, he met with Prime Minister I. I. C. Brătianu and Minister of Foreign Affairs I. G. Duca. The three statesmen agreed on the need to establish peace in the meeting also being “an expression of the convergent approach” to the problems.¹⁰ At the same time, Romanian politicians also refused a proposal by Bulgarian Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliyski who offered, in exchange for Bulgaria’s neutrality in the event of an attack by Soviet Russia, Romania would support Sofia’s efforts to have access to the Aegean Sea.¹¹

Under these conditions, at the beginning of the interwar period, Ankara’s military initiatives were seen as a danger to the *status quo* in the region. The main problem of the Romanian diplomats was the uncertainty regarding Türkiye’s intentions. For example, in a 1925 report, George Filality, the Romanian Minister in Türkiye, presented the allocation of a sum of money for the Turkish Ministry of the Navy. The problem that the Romanian diplomat was pointing out was not the fact that the funds of the Turkish Navy were being supplemented but the “sobriety” in the speech of Ihsan Bey, the Minister of the Navy. Filality pointed out that the Turkish Minister did not present “his naval plan even in general outline” contenting himself only with stating that the amount was needed for “various orders,

⁸ Mircea N. Popa, “Quelques aspects des relations roumano-turques durant la période comprise entre les Deux Guerres Mondiales”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (1981), pp. 754-755.

⁹ Adnan Sofuoğlu and Seyfi Yıldırım, “Lozan Barış Görüşmelerinde Romanya”, *Türkiye-Romanya İlişkileri: Geçmiş ve Günümüz Uluslararası Sempozyumu / International Symposium on Turkey-Romania Relations: Past and Present*, Vol. 1, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), pp. 443-459.

¹⁰ Constantin Iordan, “La place de la Roumanie dans les relations internationales de la Turquie Républicaine jusqu’en 1925”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “A. D. Xenopol”*, Vol. XXXI (1994), pp. 124-125.

¹¹ Constantin Iordan, “La place de la Roumanie dans les relations internationales de la Turquie Républicaine jusqu’en 1925”, p. 124.

purchases, and repairs”. The situation was summed up by Filality in two formulas: “It can’t be any vaguer” and simply, “mystery”.¹²

1.2. The Influence of Alliances on the Perception of Military Developments

The main cause of all these concerns of the Romanian diplomacy regarding the military developments in Türkiye was the system of international relations that Ankara had developed. Until the mid-1930s, Türkiye’s relations with Greece and the Soviet Union were the main concern of Romanian officials. Later on, Romanian diplomats closely followed the relations that Türkiye had with Nazi Germany.

For Romania, the relations between Türkiye and Greece were important both from the perspective of the outbreak of a regional conflict and because of the good relations between Bucharest and Athens. That is why the Romanian diplomats from both Ankara and Athens have carefully followed the attempts between the two states to limit armaments. Filality, in his report dated May 12, 1928, indicated that unless the two countries agreed to limit naval armaments “they would certainly ruin.”¹³ In another report, drawn up a few months later, it was rightly pointed out that the reason preventing the reaching of an agreement on the limitation of armaments was the failure to settle the disputes connected with the exchange of population.¹⁴ The report also showed that regarding the endowment program, the Turkish side was at an advantage but the Greek fleet had the advantage of being trained by an English naval mission. However, the Romanian diplomat intuited that the financial situation would lead Greece to insist on convincing the Turkish side to limit naval armaments.¹⁵ Filality was right because Türkiye and Greece signed a series of agreements, on October 30, 1930, one of which contained provisions regarding the limitation of naval forces.¹⁶

¹² Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (from now on A.M.A.E.), fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 10.

¹³ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 64.

¹⁴ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 70.

¹⁵ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 71.

¹⁶ Melek Fırat, “Yunanistan’la İlişkiler”, *Türk Dış Politikası. Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, vol. I, ed. Baskın Oran, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), pp. 347-348.

This positioning of Romania concerning Türkiye and Greece influenced the perception of Turkish military developments. The most alarming reports regarding arms purchases and the reorganization of the Turkish army were sent by the Romanian diplomatic mission in Athens. For example, in the report of February 18, 1926, the Romanian minister in Athens argued that the Turkish officials “think more like soldiers than like politicians and leaders” and presented the measures taken to reorganize and strengthen the army as preparations for a possible war.¹⁷

In the context of the information about the Turkish army obtained on the Greek channel, a report sent by Constantin Langa-Rășcanu, the Romanian Minister in Athens, on July 12, 1926, stands out. It specifies that the information was “collected and handed over to the General Staff of the Greek Army by one of his agents” and requested that a copy of the report be sent to General Alexandru Lupescu, Chief of the Romanian Army’s General Staff. The report gives details of the organization of the Turkish military, its forces, equipment, military infrastructure of Türkiye, and how the Kemalist reforms are perceived and their impact on the military.¹⁸ However, on a critical analysis, it seems inaccurate. Rich in details regarding the number of aircraft, military vehicles, the number of horses, oxen or camels used by the army, and the number of firearms, the report seems rather to try to present Türkiye as a country where civilian life is strictly controlled by the military and which prepares for war. The report also contains some erroneous conclusions. We can give two examples of them. The report states that the Kemalist Government is supported by only 50% of the population and the repair of the Goeben ship is presented as impossible.¹⁹ Even though Mustafa Kemal had to face some opposition movements, the support he had came from the absolute majority of the population. As for the repair of the Goeben, it was not only fully repaired but also renamed Yavuz and became the flagship of the Turkish fleet.²⁰

A constant in the reports coming from Athens was the presentation of Soviet influence in the endowment and organization of the Turkish army. For example, in a report dated March 10, 1926, the Romanian Minister in Athens indicated that “a minister of an allied Power”, without

¹⁷ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 19.

¹⁸ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 36-43.

¹⁹ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 41-42.

²⁰ İskender Tunaboylu, “Tarihin son dretnotu: Yavuz (Goeben)”, *Turkish Studies*, vol. 10/1 (Winter 2015), p. 781.

specifying which one, had shared with him that Türkiye “always receives large quantities of arms and ammunition from Russia -apart from those secretly bought from various European countries.”²¹

The Soviet theme was among the most sensitive issues for the officials of Bucharest. Türkiye’s good relationship with the Soviet Union was one of the most important causes that prevented the rapprochement between Ankara and Bucharest in the early years of the interwar period. Türkiye was the only country in Southeast Europe that had cordial relations with the Soviet Union.²² Turkish diplomacy had constantly tried to mediate a normalization of relations between Eastern European states and Moscow.²³ Romania refused to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow because Moscow had not recognized the incorporation of Bessarabia into Romania. Finally, the signing of the *Conventions for the Definition of Aggression*²⁴ on July 3, 1933, to which both Romania and Türkiye joined as well as the Soviet Union, improved relations between Bucharest and Moscow. Romanian politicians interpreted the Soviets’ accession to this pact as a tacit recognition of Bessarabia’s status.²⁵

There was fear among Romanian officials about any possible Soviet influence in Türkiye. The main problem from Bucharest’s perspective was the one mentioned in a diplomatic report by the Romanian Minister in Athens, Langa-Răşcanu, that “the Soviet government is looking by all means to chain Türkiye as strongly as possible”: apart from money loans given and the technicians sent to build factories, Moscow was also supplying armaments to Türkiye.²⁶

The main problem with Soviet influence on Türkiye and Ankara’s arms purchases in general was the question of respecting the demilitarization of the Straits. Thus, in a 1931 report of the Romanian Legation in Türkiye, which referred to information obtained from the representative of Japan in the Straits Commission, it was shown that

²¹ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 23.

²² Constantin Jordan-Sima, “La Turquie kémaliste et l’idée du Pacte Balkanique dans les années 1925-1926”, p. 312.

²³ Constantin Jordan-Sima, “La Turquie kémaliste et l’idée du Pacte Balkanique dans les années 1925-1926”, pp. 320-321.

²⁴ See İsmail Soysal, *Türkiye’nin siyasal andlaşmaları 1920-1945*, Vol. I, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000), p. 438-440.

²⁵ Keith Hitchins, *România 1866-1947*, p. 506.

²⁶ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 129.

Türkiye had received heavy guns and tractors for the movement of these heavy guns from the Soviet Government. These guns had been placed near the demilitarized zone and, by using the strategic roads being worked on, could be brought to the shores of the Dardanelles within 24 hours.²⁷

The fear that Türkiye could approach a revisionist state was a constant among Romanian officials. Even though it was not perceived as a danger similar to that of the Soviet Union, Türkiye's rapprochement with Nazi Germany was also viewed with apprehension. In a report dated February 11, 1936, Romania's Military Attaché in Türkiye, Lieutenant-Colonel Gheorghe Ion, expressed his concern about the growing influence of Germany in Turkish political, economic, and military life. In his opinion, "Türkiye is swarm with Germans" with all tenders for military supplies being won by them and German professors being very influential in Turkish universities and military institutions.²⁸ The Romanian Military Attaché also expressed his concern that, due to their influence in the Turkish army, the German instructors could have access to matters of a secret nature within the Balkan Pact.²⁹

Of course, it is no coincidence that Romanian officials became concerned about a possible Turkish-German rapprochement during the period when Germany led by Hitler was questioning the peace treaties signed at the end of the First World War. However, contrary to the perception of Turkish-Soviet relations, the rapprochement between Ankara and Berlin was not constantly monitored by Romanian diplomats. This is due both to the fact that Romania itself would develop close relations with Germany and to the fact that there were very good relations between Ankara and Bucharest during this period, suspicions regarding foreign policy objectives being almost non-existent.

2. Excellent Relations, Favorable Perceptions

With the signing of the *Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Arbitration and Conciliation between the Republic of Türkiye and the Kingdom of Romania*, the political relations between Ankara and Bucharest entered a very good period. This situation was also reflected in the perception, which Romanian diplomats had towards the military developments in Türkiye.

²⁷ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 106.

²⁸ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 200-205.

²⁹ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 202.

This change can be traced in two aspects. We can say that the first aspect is rather symbolic. Romanian diplomats in Türkiye have constantly complained that foreign military attachés are not invited to the maneuvers organized by the Turkish army. This hermeticism only reinforced suspicions about the intentions of Turkish officials.

This situation completely changed following the signing of the Balkan Pact. Thus, between August 18 and 23, 1937, military exercises took place in Türkiye to which the heads of the armies of the countries that were part of the Balkan Pact were invited. The importance that the Romanian side gave to this event is evident from the reaction of the Romanian Minister in Ankara, Alexandru Telemaque, upon receiving the invitation. On July 29, 1937, with the mention “extremely urgent”, he sent an address to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, in which he requested to be informed “urgently and even telegraphically” of the date when the Chief of the General Staff of Romania will arrive to Türkiye and the composition of the Romanian delegation.³⁰ Telemaque stated that although the letter was dated “July 8”, it did not arrive at the Legation until July 12. The problem was that the residence of the Military Attaché of Romania was in Istanbul and it also had the “inconvenience of being written in Turkish”.³¹ Finally, the Romanian delegation participated without problems in the military exercises and protocol activities organized by the Turkish side.³²

Regarding this event, there was a positive perception of the Romanian diplomacy. Telemaque pointed out that all protocol measures had been taken so that the delegations would be received “with all due honors”. In his opinion, the fact that the place chosen for the maneuvers was Thrace and that it was given so much importance, was a “friendly and early” warning to the Bulgarian Government in case they were planning aggression in the region. To summarize the purpose of the maneuvers, the Romanian minister used a French expression: “*à bon entendeur, salut!*”³³

³⁰ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 246.

³¹ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 247.

³² A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 248-251.

³³ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 256-259. “*À bon entendeur, salut!*” is a French expression meaning “a word to the wise is enough”.

The second aspect best reflects the change in attitude and relates to how Ankara's arms purchases were interpreted. Thus, in a 1936 report, Eugen Filotti, the Romanian Minister in Ankara, states that the efforts to equip the Turkish army accelerated and presents Türkiye's military acquisitions and its military infrastructure in detail. In his report, the Romanian diplomat shows that the strengthening of the Turkish army "must be viewed with satisfaction" and that the Romanian-Turkish alliance should be valued even more.³⁴

In another report, drawn up in 1938, Filotti's successor at the Ankara post, Alexandru Telemaque, gives information about the festivities dedicated to the anniversary of the founding of the Republic. Presenting the progress made by the Turkish army, the Romanian diplomat pointed out that "the members of the Balkan Pact can only be happy to note once again that Türkiye is faithfully fulfilling its duties that make it fit to be able to serve the policy of peace and tranquillity that form the basis and political essence of this pact."³⁵

3. Admiration for the Patriotism or Skepticism regarding the Enthusiasm: Romanian Diplomats' Perception of the Turkish Army

A constant of the Romanian diplomatic reports about the Turkish army was, with few exceptions, the admiration for the reorganizing capacity of the army and the patriotism of the Turkish population. In their reports, the Romanian diplomats presented the legislative initiatives regarding the army, the contracts for military acquisitions, the organization of the military infrastructure, and the necessary funds for the reorganization of the army. One of the first detailed reports on the reorganization of the Turkish army was prepared by George Filality, the Romanian Minister in Türkiye, in early 1925 and it was on the occasion of some statements by Ihsan Bey (Eryavuz), the head of the Navy Ministry, about how he sees the reorganization of the navy and naval personnel. Filality admires the Turkish Minister's vision of what the Turkish navy should look like and says that he is surprised that Ihsan Bey's ideas "have a practical character", stating with a slight irony that this "coming from a Turk is something completely new".³⁶

³⁴ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 210.

³⁵ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 291-292.

³⁶ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 6.

The Turkish army was seen by Romanian diplomats as the main support of the Government. Filality notes in a 1926 report that “the boundless confidence which the Turks have today in the strength of their army is impressive”³⁷ and that “they owe everything to it”, even their existence.³⁸

However, there were also negative remarks. They can be identified in the first half of the 1930s. They specifically refer to how the involvement of the civilian population in the actions of the army, especially in the recruitment process, was presented. For example, in a report dated May 22, 1926, referring to how the Turkish newspapers reported on the enthusiasm of the Turks to participate in a series of military maneuvers, the Romanian Minister in Türkiye, George Filality, presented his own observations. In his opinion, the media report was an exaggeration, stating that, in fact, the young people were quite reluctant to participate in the military exercises.³⁹ In his report of May 19, 1926, the Romanian diplomat argued that the “enthusiasm” of the civilian population to participate in the army’s actions was exacerbated to “impress the foreign countries” that could have claims on Turkish territories. Thus, Türkiye wanted to create the image that “the army of the Republic, to which the nation has entrusted the task of defending it, (...), is always ready to fulfill (...) all the tasks entrusted to it.”⁴⁰ In other words, in the opinion of the Romanian diplomat, this was a strategy to discourage the states that could have claims on Turkish territories. A parallel was thus made, very likely, with the *National Struggle* when the involvement of the entire Turkish nation made victory possible.

The positive remarks regarding the reorganization and endowment of the Turkish army were much clearer in the second half of the 1930s when the political relations between the two countries had also reached a very good level.

Throughout the process of reorganizing and equipping the Turkish army, Romanian diplomats have repeatedly emphasized the financial difficulties faced by Ankara officials. Most of the reports regarding the overcoming of the financial impediment in the development of the military

³⁷ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 29.

³⁸ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 26.

³⁹ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 34.

⁴⁰ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 29.

were those regarding the development of Turkish military aviation. In fact, how the Turkish authorities managed to collect the necessary funds was described in detail in the Romanian diplomatic reports many times, recommending that the Turkish model be taken over by the Romanian authorities in the organization of the Romanian Aviation Propaganda Association (*Asociația Română pentru Propaganda Aviației*).

The secret for the success enjoyed by the Turkish Aeroplane League (*Türk Tayyare Cemiyeti*) was summarized by the Romanian Minister in Türkiye in a 1927 report in the following way: “the boundless confidence that the people have both in the directives of the leaders who ensured the great national victory and in the ‘correctness’ and patriotism of those who manage the funds and run the Aeroplane League”.⁴¹ The word ‘correctness’ was underlined in the report.

References to the development of the military infrastructure were not absent from the reports of the Romanian diplomats. Some of the civilian initiatives were assigned for military purposes. For example, in a report from 1933, the Romanian Minister in Ankara, Ion P. Carp, refers to the importance for the Turkish Government regarding the development of the railway network for the defense of the country.⁴²

In another report from 1933, referring first to the general framework of Turkish foreign policy, the Romanian diplomat shows that the new state was built “on a national basis without imperialist aspirations of any kind” and that this is also the way “how the Kemalist regime develops its national defense”.⁴³ The report shows admiration to the fact that, in a fairly short period and under limited financial conditions, Türkiye managed to develop a railway network covering all regions of the country, connecting artillery depots, weapons factories, and facilitating transportation of troops to the border areas. The conclusion is unequivocal: “In a word, today, Türkiye is already in a state of defense and represents a military factor to be reckoned, situated on two continents and the master of the Straits.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 56.

⁴² A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 140.

⁴³ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, Vol. 44, f. 142.

⁴⁴ A.M.A.E., fond 71/Turcia, vol. 44, f. 143.

Conclusions

Regarding the conclusions of this paper, we could say, very briefly, the following: First, the perception of Romanian diplomats on military developments in Türkiye was influenced by the state of political relations between the two countries. In the first half of the interwar period, Romanian officials viewed the military changes in Türkiye with mistrust. The main reason for this attitude was the close relationship that Ankara had with the Soviet Union, a country with which Romania did not even have diplomatic relations. Also, the officials from Bucharest carefully followed the evolution of relations between Ankara and Athens. In their view, Turkish-Greek relations had the potential to cause a regional conflict to break out. That is why the most alarming reports regarding the endowment of the Turkish army were prepared by Romanian diplomats in Athens, relying on Greek sources.

The situation changed completely at the beginning of the 1930s when not only did the political relations between the two countries reach a high level but Romania also established diplomatic relations with Moscow.

Regardless of the period, a constant was the admiration for the patriotism of the Turkish population, the dedication of the Turkish leaders to achieve their goals, and the ability to modernize the army in a short time.

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TURKISH-ROMANIAN RELATIONS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD: FROM MISTRUST TO UNDERSTANDING

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Abstract

Romanian-Turkish relations in the interwar period are defined, mainly, by reporting the important regional achievements, to which both countries made a major contribution: the Balkan Entente (of which the founding document was signed in Athens on February 9, 1934) and the Black Sea Straits Convention from Montreux (signed on July 20, 1936). However, the set of bilateral relations is much more complex and dynamic, including reserved attitudes, tempered divergences and bilateral diplomatic discourse marked by mutual appreciation or criticism depending on the situation. Issues in dispute were, among others, the functioning of the International Straits Commission, the move of the Romanian Legation from Istanbul to Ankara, the different attitudes towards the Soviet Union, and the emigration of the Turkish-Tatars from Dobrogea. Convergence after 1934/1936 was ensured, of course, by the two regional understandings in which both countries found themselves but bilateral relations, as a whole, only found the consistency in the last decade. The need for regional security was also accompanied by the need for better bilateral development and the Friendship Treaty of 1933, the mutual visits of the heads of the two diplomacies, and the settlement of the problems of Turkish-Tatar migration undoubtedly played a major role. Not by chance, after 1936, military contacts also appeared -visits at the level of chiefs of staff and contacts with the Romanian armaments industry (and the Turkish side showing interest in this regard). Studies of Romanian historiography and archival documents demonstrate this difficult route, at the beginning marked by reservations, including about the modernization effort of the new Republic which, however, was largely depicted in the reports of Romanian diplomats.

Keywords: Balkan Entente, Diplomacy, Romanian-Turkish Relations, Interwar Period.

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Introduction

The Turkish-Romanian relations in interwar benefit from some important studies and published documents, of Romanian historians (only partially mentioned here), which allow us to see the details, nuances and mutual perceptions, besides the well-known important moments, such as Balkan Entente and Montreux Convention, from the IVth decade. The historiographical achievements of Romanian historians are based on various types of documents, the most important being the diplomatic reports of Romanian diplomats from Istanbul and Ankara. Not once, do these reports have long descriptions of the internal developments of the new Turkish Republic, of their reforms and their leaders.

1. Political Gestures and Ambivalent Declarations

It is difficult to categorise the evolution of Turkish-Romanian relations in the interwar period. Many attempts take the year 1933 as a dividing line, the year in which both countries signed the Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Arbitrage and Conciliation, on October 17, which opened the way for the Balkan Entente. The decade before 1933 could be defined as one of retained mutual position, in which attitudes of distrust and understanding overlap and mix, sometimes at a short distance between them, even if, through the Lausanne Treaty, the political relations entered into normality.¹

The beginning of diplomatic relations was cautious. Within the Romanian public opinion, many worries were shared as to the fact that the flames of the Greek-Turkish war could spread more widely into the Balkans.² After that, the foreign policy strategies of both countries (especially the different relationships with the Soviet Union, with which Turkey had a friendship treaty but Romania had nothing than unresolved issues, starting from Moscow's lack of desire to recognise the Eastern Romanian frontier and return the Romanian National Bank thesaurus, which was entrusted to former Russian Tsarist Empire, in the very difficult conditions the end of 1916)³, counted in that retained relation. Other

¹ Veniamin Ciobanu, *Problema orientală (1856-1923)*, (Iași: Editura Junimea, 2009), p. 175.

² "Universul", Year XL, No. 214, 23.09.1922

³ *Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României la Moscova. Documente*, second edition revised and added, foreword by academician Mugur Isărescu, historical presentation and edition by Cristian Păunescu and Marian Ștefan, Oscar Print, (București, 2011).

“incidents” contribute to the state of bilateral untrust. For example, the discontent of Gheorghe Filality, an Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Envoy to Constantinople, regarding the speech delivered in the Great National Assembly by Mustafa Kemal, on 3 November 1924 was obvious:

I am surprised to find [...] that the President of the Republic did not consider it important to utter two phrases about Romania. I would have expected that, after all the signs of friendship shown and that we are still showing, after the extraordinary welcome of the Turkish students, who went home from us only a few days ago, the most elementary common sense requested that we are not forgotten.”⁴

Some dissatisfaction emerged within the International Straits Commission⁵ or from bilateral logistical accommodation issues. The move of the Royal Legation from Istanbul to Ankara was a subject of real controversy between the Romanian side, which was unhappy with the inhospitality of the young republic’s capital, and the Turkish side, which saw the delay in relocating as a real affront to national prestige and honour: “Romania’s lack of contact -for so many years- with Ankara has always grieved the Turkish government and has not helped the Romanian government to understand the true situation of the Turkish Republic”, said Tevfik Rüstü Bey.⁶

As for mutual understanding and appreciation, several situations support this definition. Political gestures and declarations made at more or less important levels are recorded for the 1920s.

In the first direction, we could mention: Romania’s refusal to follow the British proposal of September 1922 to send troops to Istanbul or Romania’s rejection of the proposal made by the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Aleksander Stamboliiski, on his way through Bucharest to Lausanne (November 1922): Bulgaria’s neutrality against a Soviet attack on Romania in exchange for Romania’s support for Bulgaria’s exit from

⁴ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, Vol. I, (1923-1938), ed. Alexandru Ghișa și Dumitru Preda, (București: Editura Cavallioti, 2011), p. 12.

⁵ Emanuel Plopeanu, “Romanian-Turkish Relations in Interwar period: issues, perceptions and solutions. The case of Black Sea Straits’ regime and Turkish-Tatars emigration”, *Revista Istorică*, Vol. XXIII, No. 5-6, (2012), p. 439-440.

⁶ Florin Anghel, “O relație, două case: Istanbul și Ankara. Diplomația româno-turcă la începutul alianței (1927-1928)”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Contemporană*, new series, Vol. 11, (2012), p. 48.

the Aegean, involving territorial claims to Greece and Turkish Thrace. Ismet Pasha's unofficial visit to Bucharest on 13 and 14 February 1923 (on his return from Lausanne) only reinforced the trend towards rapprochement between the two countries.⁷ From Lausanne conference meetings, Romanian Foreign Minister, I.Gh. Duca, transmitted, in December 1922, that the Turks wanted to reach peace: "They made concessions, and they will make some more. And, for them, nothing is more important than economic matters. The regime of foreign interference in their internal affairs will never be accepted. The new Turkey reclaims economic independence, after the political one, but never one without the other. And, let's be honest, they're right".⁸ Also from Lausanne, I. Gh. Duca transmitted that "we should not reject the Turkish proposal [...] I already sketched a friendly attitude towards the intransigent Turks."⁹

Under these auspices, the signs of goodwill continued to appear. In 1924, a visit -cancelled for personal reasons- by Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu¹⁰ was part of the same positive outlook, as was Romania's reluctance -conveyed to Ankara- in 1925 to Greece's offer to conclude a bilateral alliance or to join the Little Entente.¹¹ A year later, in February 1926, Tevfik Rüstü Bey informed the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ion Gh. Duca, about a project for a Balkan Entente¹² and, in the spring of 1927, launched the formula "Balkans of the Balkanians" as a firm statement of the desire for freedom and independence in the area.¹³ Nicolae Titulescu (in his first term as Minister of Foreign Affairs) sent a message of friendship that made his counterpart in Ankara, Tevfik Rüstü Bey, who

⁷ Constantin Iordan, "La Roumanie, la Turquie kemaliste et les Balkans (1921-1925): interferences politiques et diplomatiques", (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1994), p. 2528.

⁸ Liliana Boşcan, *Diplomatic and Economic Relations Between the Kingdom of Romania and the Republic of Turkey during the Atatürk period (1923 – 1938)*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), p. 37.

⁹ Liliana Boşcan, *Diplomatic and Economic Relations Between the Kingdom of Romania and the Republic of Turkey during the Atatürk period (1923 – 1938)*, p. 38.

¹⁰ Constantin Iordan, "La Roumanie, la Turquie kemaliste et les Balkans (1921-1925): interferences politiques et diplomatiques", p. 2529.

¹¹ Constantin Iordan, "La Roumanie, la Turquie kemaliste et les Balkans (1921-1925): interferences politiques et diplomatiques", p. 2530.

¹² Constantin Iordan, "La Roumanie, la Turquie kemaliste et les Balkans (1921-1925): interferences politiques et diplomatiques", p. 2533.

¹³ Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Relațiile româno-turce între cele două războaie mondiale*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1993), p. 30.

declared himself “manifestly moved”, asking that his Romanian counterpart, Nicolae Titulescu, be sent “his feelings of deep gratitude and warm friendship.”¹⁴

In the second direction, that of declarations, among many of them we select some: Among all Eastern Powers, we are fully confident that Romania is the only country with which we will have sincere relations, which would lead to further rapprochement. Romania is the only strong state and in its honesty and loyalty, we put all our trust. The Bucharest governments always kept their promises. Romania is the most permissive, most welcoming and most non-chauvinist country.”

These were the words of a “Turkish personality,” used in a conversation in Sofia, in February 1924, with a Romanian diplomat, who, in turn, sent them to Constantin Langa-Rășcanu, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Envoy to our southern neighbour’s capital.¹⁵ From the same Balkan capital came another message, less than a month later. Enver Bey, the Turkish Consul General, transmitted to a Romanian diplomat a passage from a speech made to the National Assembly in Ankara by the President of the Council of Ministers, Ismet Pasha: “Everywhere, our representatives were badly received. Only one state gave a friendly welcome to our envoy: Romania...”.¹⁶ Moreover when Gheorghe Filality’s presented his letters of accreditation on April 24, 1924, Mustafa Kemal extended the conversation with the Romanian diplomat, affirming his sympathy towards Romanians and Romania, as well as his wish that “relations between the two countries be as friendly as possible”, and his wish to visit Romania “which he had only crossed a few years ago and of which he had only a very vague idea”.¹⁷

One obvious fact emerges from this development: Turkey perceived Romania as a partner of growing importance, both for bilateral relations and in the regional strategy of the new republic, and this can be seen at the beginning of the fourth decade, in some directions:

- 1) The signing of a Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Arbitrage and Conciliation, on 17 October 1933, as the basis of future relations, which was completed with the Clearing

¹⁴ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 49.

¹⁵ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 7.

¹⁶ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 9

¹⁷ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 12

Agreement, from 4 October 1936, and the Commercial Agreement on 24 January 1938.

2) The common position regarding Balkan security, which was based on European initiatives (Briand-Kellogg Pact from 27 August 1928, the Moscow Protocol, from 9 February 1929, the Conventions from 3–4 July 1933, for the definition of aggression). Consequently, a common view was built, at Romania's and Turkey's initiative, which would lead to the Balkan Entente, after four countries (Greece and Yugoslavia adhered), signed a pact at Athens, on February 9, 1934. This, however, did not happen without some restrictions, which must be underlined: Turkey rejected the possibility of getting involved in a conflict with the Soviet Union and this condition was fully agreed with.

3) Common views about the Straits' regime, which would lead to the replacement of the former international regime and the transformation of Turkey into the sole responsible for the passage, of war and peace, according to the provisions of the Montreux Convention. At the time of the Montreux Conference, Nicolae Titulescu, head of Romanian diplomacy, made a statement that would be frequently quoted by those who analyzed this topic, as a strong example of Romanian-Turkish identity of views. Briefly, Titulescu compared the Straits with the heart of Turkey but also with the lungs of Romania.¹⁸

4) The common approach (not without differences of opinions) to the issue of Turks and Tatars' emigration from Dobrudja, in the fourth decade, which led to the Convention for the Dobrudja's Turkish population emigration, signed on September 4, 1936.¹⁹

The bilateral treaty was signed in a very cordial atmosphere, on the occasion of Nicolae Titulescu's visit to the Turkish capital. The treaty provided for "inviolable peace and sincere and perpetual friendship" between the two countries and their peoples.²⁰ The visit was historic (nine years earlier, Prime Minister Ion. I. C. Brătianu was supposed to visit

¹⁸ Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, introductive study, selected texts and annotation by Robert Deutsch, (București: Editura Științifică, 1967), p. 530.

¹⁹ Metin Omer, *İki Dünya Savaşı Arasında Romanya'daki Türk-Tatar Toplumu ve Türkiye'ye Göçler*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2023).

²⁰ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 131-133.

Istanbul but this visit never happened) and the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs received the highest honours, both in Istanbul and in Ankara, according to all reports of Romanian diplomats. They underlined the enthusiasm generated among the authorities and the press in Istanbul and Ankara by the presence of “this great statesman”.²¹ In turn, important testimonies on this visit are given by the Turkish press. The important daily newspaper “Akşam” reported Nicolae Titulescu’s trip to Turkey on its front page and daily from 15 to 18 October.²² In Ankara, starting on 16 October, the head of the Romanian diplomacy was received with cordiality, right from the train station, to his residence, Ankara Palace, Romanian and Turkish flags were unfurled and the population applauded the Romanian guest “warmly”.²³ Nicolae Titulescu was received by the President of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal, on 16 October, a reception that lasted two hours. Afterwards, he had meetings with his Turkish counterpart Tevfik Rüştü Bey as well as with Prime Minister Ismet Pasha, Parliament Speaker Kâzım-bey, and Economy Minister Mahmut Celâl.²⁴

At the gala reception in the evening of the same day, Tevfik Rüştü Bey addressed Nicolae Titulescu: “Your Excellency and our dear friend” while the Romanian guest underlined the “sincere friendship between the Romanian and Turkish peoples”.²⁵ On his departure from Ankara, Titulescu declared: “I leave Ankara with a very strong and very pleasant emotion. Very strong, because I am full of admiration for the concrete and amazing results that the Turkish people have achieved in the last ten years. Very pleasant, because I have found in the Turkish leaders an understanding of the spirit of humanity, which explains very well the peaceful policy that Turkey pursues towards all the nations of the world. In our conversations, I could see a perfect harmony of views on all the issues we discussed. The explanation is very simple: Romania, like Turkey, sees only one thing: peace in itself and not in its selfish advantages. As for the treaty signed today, for me, it is the first link in the

²¹ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 129-130.

²² “Akşam”, No.5394-5397, October 15-18.

²³ “Akşam”, No.5395, October 16.

²⁴ Temuçin Faik Ertan, ‘Balkan Antantı’nin kuruluş ve gelişim sürecinde Romanya’dan Türkiye’ye diplomatik ziyaretler’, *Türkiye-Romanya İlişkileri: Geçmiş ve Günümüz Uluslararası Sempozyumu/International Symposium on Turkey-Romania Relations: Past and Present*, 04-06 Ekim/October 2017, Köstence/Constanța, Bildiriler/Papers, Cilt/Vol. I, (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 2019), p. 642.

²⁵ “Akşam”, No.5395, October 16.

organisation of peace in the Balkans, to which seems to me that all countries, without exception, must work with all their might”.²⁶

Only eight months later, on 11 May 1934, Tefvik Rüştü Bey returned the visit of the Romanian Foreign Minister and was received in Bucharest. The speeches of the two ministers give the measure of the special relationship, beyond the complementarity imposed by diplomatic protocol. Nicolae Titulescu said: “During the long months at the Geneva conferences, we both evolved, Mr Minister, from observation to sympathy, from sympathy to action and from action to the organisation”.²⁷ In his reply, Tefvik Rüştü Bey mentioned: “The entirely spontaneous affection with which you were surrounded there and which was also addressed to your high personalities and the noble nation represented by your Excellency, was, moreover, nothing other than brilliant proofs of the mutual trust which inspires the relations between our two peoples”.²⁸ For the next two years, as long as Nicolae Titulescu is the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, declarations of sincere and deep friendship would be permanent and in major moments.

Romanian-Turkish relations in the interwar period generally followed a constantly positive trajectory and the beginning of the 1930s can be considered the peak of these relations and it is undoubtedly linked to the personality of Nicolae Titulescu and Tefvik Rüştü Aras. The issue of bilateral and regional security benefited from identical solutions from both leaders of the two diplomacies. However, at the same time, there were other problems -the emigration of Turks and Tatars from Dobrogea, and the low level of trade- which affected relations between the two countries, without leading to their deterioration. For the period under discussion, the common denominator was the Balkan Agreement and the new Straits regime, an issue, on which the two countries would find themselves in similar positions.

The Montreux Convention, which was signed on 20 July 1936 by Bulgaria, France, Greece, Japan, Romania, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Great Britain and the Soviet Union in a difficult international political context, marked by Italian aggression in Ethiopia and German remilitarisation of the Rhine area, abolished the International Commission and gave Turkey

²⁶ “Adevărul”, No. 15273, October 20.

²⁷ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 153.

²⁸ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 155.

full responsibility for the control of navigation in the Straits. It also allowed Turkey to remilitarise the Straits to ensure its security. The Montreux Convention stipulated (like the previous document) absolute freedom of commercial navigation but also detailed the situations in which military vessels could pass through the Straits, depending on Turkey's attitude (non-belligerent, belligerent or neutral), and the number of vessels, their tonnage, and the period of stationing in the Black Sea.²⁹

The initiative to change the status of the Straits came from Turkey, which sent a note to the signatories of the Lausanne Convention on 10 April 1936. In its reply to this note, Romania stated: "Given that Turkey has never and will never call into question the territorial clauses of the treaties concerning Romania, given that between Turkey and Romania, there are the London Treaties of 3 and 4 July 1933, which prohibit aggression [...] given that between Turkey and Romania there exists a synchronicity of trust, which no doubt could be achieved and an active friendship to maintain peace [...]. The Royal Government of Romania, taking special account of the special circumstances which characterise Turkish-Romanian relations, has the honour to inform you that it agrees to begin in the most friendly spirit the negotiations referred to in your note of 11 April 1936."³⁰

At the beginning of the conference, Nicolae Titulescu considered Turkey's request reasonable and expressed his full support for this approach, warning that failure to agree to such an approach would deal a serious blow to faith in the adoption of (international, in this case) laws by mutual consent: "Gentlemen, I think there is one more point, to Turkey's credit, which it would be unfair to pass over in silence. In these times, when respect for international commitments is a principle all the more precious because its application has become rare, Turkey, faithful to the law, instead of resorting to unilateral repudiation, which may create *fait accompli* but can never create law, has had the great merit of avoiding this procedure, choosing the legal route, which requires mutual consent."³¹

²⁹ Anthony R. Deluca, *Great Power Rivalry at the Turkish Straits: the Montreux Conference and Convention of 1936*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 77-113.

³⁰ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 153-157.

³¹ Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, p. 530.

Once again, Nicolae Titulescu's legal training was placed at the service of international law, equal for everyone, or as the great Romanian diplomat put it: "Now, at this conference, the Royal Government of Romania wishes to express its greetings to Turkey, friend and ally, in these simple words: Success, justice!"³²

As it can be seen, being faithful to the principle of collective security and mutually assured territorial integrity, Romania appreciated the initiative of the Republic of Turkey in the broader context of international documents defining (and prohibiting) aggression. The prospect of better security for the riparian states, with Turkey as the sole guarantor, also contributed to this outcome. Romania also placed the approach in the narrow context of bilateral relations, characterised as positive, and based on "active friendship". Moreover, the same Nicolae Titulescu was to say, during the conference sessions: "Let us not forget that our entire war in 1916 was hampered by the closure of the Straits. It is true that, at that time, the Turks were not on our side, that I did everything in my power to bring Romania and Turkey closer together, and I can say with all responsibility that today Turkey and Romania are only one country."³³

The entire conference was punctuated by friendly speeches between the heads of the two diplomats. Nicolae Titulescu also declared: "This is why you will allow me to conclude with a declaration of gratitude to my friend Rüştü Aras. He [...] said that everything that concerns my country will be given special consideration. My dear Aras, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am now leaving Montreux, carrying to my country the words of friendship you have spoken."³⁴

For his part, the acting head of Turkish diplomacy, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, wished to "express Turkey's great appreciation for Romania's attitude and your Excellency's interventions" (of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Titulescu). The gratitude was repeated together with the request that Romania proceed as soon as possible to ratify the Montreux Convention, which was done at the end of August 1936. Perhaps a famous quotation by Nicolae Titulescu defined: "There is a stage of friendship where you don't need to talk to get along, nor do you need advice to act together."

³² Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, p. 531.

³³ Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, p. 534.

³⁴ Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, p. 535.

2. Some Romanian Perceptions of the Kemalist Reforms

As we mentioned at the beginning, the transformation of Ottoman society into a Turkish westernised one was analysed, sometimes even in detail, by the Romanian diplomats from Istanbul and Ankara. For example, the Romanian Consul in Istanbul, Vasile Anastasiu, has captured a multitude of initiatives taken by the Ankara authorities. Thus, in an extensive telegram of 8 September 1925, Vasile Anastasiu described the context and the measures taken by the Republican government to close down the religious establishments in the eastern part of Turkey (“*tekke*”, monasteries, mausoleums, sanctuaries), following Sheikh Said’s uprising in February-April 1925, which benefited from the support and shelter of these institutions. In the same report, another measure regulating the dress code of civil servants (according to the Western model) is presented. According to Vasile Anastasiu, the social reform now carried out by the Angora government completes the complete secularisation of the Turkish Republic. All measures have been taken for the implementation of the above-mentioned decree, closing here, in Constantinople, the 200 monasteries and “*tekke-le*” that existed until now, as well as in the other localities. No one has dared to protest, and the government’s decisions are being implemented without hesitation, as the present dictatorship regime does not allow any discussion of the reforms that have started in Angora.³⁵

As regards clothing, Vasile Anastasiu said that the Angora government, headed by the President of the Republic, was convinced that forcing civil servants to wear the clothes that were customary in other countries and inviting the Turkish population in general to imitate this example, would contribute to the civilisation of Turkey.³⁶

However, despite the discourse dominated by strong formulas (“dictatorship”) and the insistence on modernisation, certain aspects were, in Vasile Anastasiu’s opinion, still deficient, and criticism was not slow in coming: “What should concern the government, however, is to change not only the clothing but also the mentality of civil servants. Despite the reforms carried out in the last two years, the same spirit of intolerance towards Turkish citizens of a religion other than Muslim and a pronounced hatred of all foreigners, in general, continues to persist in the Turkish Republic.”³⁷

³⁵ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 22.

³⁶ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 23

³⁷ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 23.

Vasile Anastasiu took a special interest in the transition to the Latin script, a subject which is reported in two substantial reports. The first of these reports, dated 14 August 1928, detailed older and more recent developments regarding “a new and important reform [...] about to take place in Turkey through the adoption of Latin characters for the writing of the Turkish language”.³⁸ A far-reaching reform: “For more than a year the matter had been talked about and discussed in principle whether the reform would be feasible. Some time ago, a special commission composed of scholars, professors, and deputies was appointed in Angora to study closely the most suitable means of adopting Latin characters. This commission now meets regularly here in Constantinople and having established the Turkish alphabet with Latin letters, is working with great diligence on the formation of a grammar, syntax and dictionary of the new characters.”³⁹

The role of President Mustafa Kemal is mentioned, as well as the speeches he gave, in which he stressed the need for reform. The report does not miss concrete measures: the inauguration of a course at Dolmabahçe Palace, the Istanbul headquarters of the Presidency of the Republic, to teach writing and reading to the staff of this institution and “several members of parliament here and ladies from local Turkish society”.⁴⁰ Because personal example must be the driving force of reform, “Ghazi personally attends the course taught by a Turkish teacher and is very pleased with the progress made by the people taking the course”.⁴¹ Following his example, the Republican People’s Party would organise similar courses for civil servants who would also benefit from evening classes, learning the new spelling being, of course, compulsory. The entire reform programme was being carried out under Mustafa Kemal’s close and constant supervision, including the work of the language commission.⁴²

The reform timetable also includes the introduction of Latin script in Turkish schools in the autumn of the same year. The Romanian Consul, as in his previous report, devoted to the abolition of religious establishments and the introduction of compulsory Western dress for civil servants, did not conclude his report without stressing the effect of the

³⁸ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 53.

³⁹ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 53.

⁴⁰ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

⁴¹ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

⁴² *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

President's direct involvement and the impediments, which are to be, more or less easily, overcome. In the first direction, as Ghazi personally had taken the lead in the movement for the introduction of Latin characters, it was to be expected that great efforts would be made on all sides to bring this important reform to fruition.⁴³

As for the difficulties, "in practice, enormous difficulties will be encountered, and it will be years -how many, no one can foresee- before the Turkish language will be written in Latin letters by all scholars."⁴⁴ But, the latter is only a minority: "Ghazi himself has had to state, in public, that in this century of light and civilisation, it is a shame for a country like Turkey, where the percentage of book scholars is barely 10%."⁴⁵

The prospects are, however, encouraging: "Parallel to the efforts now begun for the introduction of Latin characters, the Turkish rulers seemed determined to work with great perseverance for the enlightenment of the people, establishing numerous schools and even forcing adults to learn books. All these strivings towards culture and civilisation are commendable and prove the deep desire of the Turks to break with the past."⁴⁶

The subject of changing the spelling returned to Vasile Anastasiu's attention two weeks later. The President's proclamation (which followed the report of 14 August) on the need to implement the Latin spelling led to "feverish and praiseworthy activity, which was immediately manifested throughout the country for the propagation of the new alphabet".⁴⁷ The press began to publish "on a trial basis" small articles in the new script.

These newspapers regard the reform of the alphabet as one of the last stages of the national struggle and no less sacred than the actual battles that secured the nation's independence.⁴⁸

Again, information was given on the courses held at Dolmabahçe Palace, where the number of participants had increased, including "all the deputies present here, more than 100 in number, headed by the Ghazi and

⁴³ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

⁴⁴ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 57.

⁴⁸ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 57.

the President of the Council, the Ministers of Interior, and Finance, the President of the National Assembly.”⁴⁹

The reform was quickly propagated, with courses being organised in state institutions, universities, private companies and banks, and the linguistics commission preparing a spelling manual and a new dictionary. Progress was also geographical, covering the rest of Turkey, starting with Ankara, and continuing with Trabzon, Samsun, Bursa, and İzmir.⁵⁰

As far as the educational system is concerned, according to Vasile Anastasiu, the Ministry of Public Instruction had decided to start schools late (in November), while teachers are being introduced to the new spelling and fundamental books and textbooks were being printed to teach pupils. The pressure of the short time available could also be seen from the insistence with which teachers were advised (at the Ankara Congress, held a few days before this report was issued) “to redouble their efforts to teach the new characters to all the children of the country”.⁵¹

In Vasile Anastasiu’s perception, the “meritorious” efforts that were being made in implementing this reform prove how great and powerful the Ghazi ascendancy was over the entire Turkish people. The President had expressed on several occasions his great satisfaction at the speed with which his appeal had been answered. On a trip he made to Rodosto [Tekir Dag], Ghazi said that he was astonished to see that the people there -and even the illiterate- had also learned the new alphabet, without even having a guidebook at hand, subject to the approval of the competent authorities. “It is not at all difficult to get an idea” said Ghazi at last, “of the future fate of the Turkish nation, which, in this matter, sees and feels as I do, and which is determined energetically to break with the past, removing all obstacles which have hitherto stood in its way, towards prosperity and civilization.”⁵²

These were not the only reform initiatives under consideration. Throughout the inter-war period, Romanian diplomats signalled and highlighted the measures adopted in the direction of modernisation in a Western spirit. For example, the adoption of surnames, in June 1934, was also reported. Or about the introduction of the Sunday and legal days of

⁴⁹ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 57.

⁵⁰ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 58.

⁵¹ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 58.

⁵² *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 58.

resting.⁵³ On the first one, a Romanian diplomat stated that based on the law regarding the mandatory adoption of a surname -one of the Kemalist reforms naturally deriving from the adoption of a European civil code- all citizens must choose and register their surname by July 1936. Otherwise, the Vilayet administration is authorized to provide them with an “*ex officio*” surname. Given that the lower classes of the urban population and the rural one were in no haste to comply with this disposition, the Government has arranged for the delegates of the neighbourhoods to proceed with registering the surnames.⁵⁴

Nor are the changes in political behaviour -in the modern sense- neglected in Vasile Anastasiu’s observation effort. We note a report of 15 September 1928, which analyses “a great speech” by the President of the Council, Ismet Pasha, in Malatya (his constituency) “following the example of the heads of government of European countries with democratic regimes”.⁵⁵ According to Vasile Anastasiu, Ismet Pasha’s approach to clarify Turkey’s foreign and domestic policy was all the more important because “Turkey is not a country of public opinion and [...] the electorate does not yet possess the necessary political education”. Consequently, “this speech constitutes a happy beginning for the enlightenment and civic education of the masses who, until recent years, have lived in complete indifference regarding public affairs”, the Romanian diplomat expressed.⁵⁶

Also, travellers and writers expressed their opinions about the magnitude of transformations in the new Republic. From many of those opinions, we choose to quote from Dr. Preda Gheorghe (*Impresii dintr-o călătorie în Occident. Câteva considerații de ordin politic și economic*, București, 1926): “It was not the only salwar and fes, seen as symbols of the religious community, that vanished in Turkish public life; even yashmak and women’s scarves had the same destiny and Turkish women began to imitate their Western sisters, wearing hats, costumes and fashioned coats. Adopting all the advancements in the modern world

⁵³ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 153-157.

⁵⁴ Daniela Popescu, “The Reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: a decade of Romanian perception – at the bond of Politics and Society; between Secular and Archaic”, *Türkiye-Romanya İlişkileri Geçmiş ve Günümüz Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, Vol. II, ed. Duygu Türker Çelik, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2019), p. 1258.

⁵⁵ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 59.

⁵⁶ *România-Turcia. Relații diplomatice*, p. 59.

(electricity, telephone, aeroplanes, and communications), the new Turkish citizen wants to show us that they have already accepted European fashion, breaking down forever the relationship between faith and hairdressing customs. At the same time, these reforms made by Kemal Pasha led Turkish nationalism by rewriting its national idioms, changing foreign words into ancient ones, and renaming old localities, cities and towns, or even denominations of some old trades companies because all of these had Greek or Armenian names.”⁵⁷ Also, more known Romanian Princess Martha Bibescu wrote the following: “At Pera, where I live, a perfect musical inferno is freed from sunset until two o’clock at night”,⁵⁸ which was only another demonstration of the transition toward a cosmopolitan Western-style Istanbul and, consequently, Turkey, if we referred to Istanbul, at that moment, as the very centre of society.

Conclusions

These insights into Turkish-Romanian relations dialogue in the interwar period are, of course, just pieces of a larger picture including many other bilateral evolutions, which were not included above. However, the sinuous way from lack of thrust to strategic convergence follows the pattern described, at least from the Romanian perspective. The disputed issues were not so deep to prevent the rapprochement, which gained speed in the 1930s. Future research, which could take into account the Turkish perceptions of the bilateral relation, as appeared in the Romanian diplomats’ reports, could bring more light and complete the image of the Romanian-Turkish special relationship in the interwar period.

⁵⁷ Armand Guță, “Turkey image in the Romanian travelling literature between 1840 and 1940”, in *Turkey and Romania. A History of Partnership and Collaboration in the Balkans*, ed. Florentina Nițu, Cosmin Ioniță, Metin Ünver, Özgür Kolçak, Hacer Topaktaş, (Istanbul: Türk Dünyası Belediyeler Birliği, 2016), p. 484-485.

⁵⁸ Charles King, *Miezul nopții la Pera Palace. Nașterea Istanbulului modern*, (București: Editura Trei, 2017), p. 119.

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ROMANIAN-TURKISH MILITARY RELATIONS IN 1939: THE CHALLENGES OF THE BLACK SEA AND BALKAN STATUS-QUO

Carmen-Sorina RIJNOVEANU*

“In a fair-minded policy, it was impossible to oppose the nation’s independence on the basis of a mutual understanding, which for us is best exemplified by our close friendship with the masters of the Straits.”

(Grigore Gafencu, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1939-1940)¹

Abstract

The relations between Romania and Türkiye had a positive evolution throughout the interwar period. However, the year 1939 put the relationship between the two countries to the test against the background of increasing regional uncertainty and growing challenges that the two countries had to face. Why 1939? Two reasons are particularly important: the first refers to the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which radically challenged the continent’s geopolitical architecture; the second concerns the moment of the invasion of Poland and, implicitly, the start of the World War II. Both events significantly influenced how Romania and Türkiye sought to accommodate their security agendas in order to manage the geopolitical shifts within their shared areas of interest, namely the Balkans and the Black Sea regions. My paper will seek to decipher how the collapse of the European order shaped the overall configuration of Romanian-Turkish military relations. What were the main military challenges facing Romania and Türkiye? What were the strategies followed by the two actors as regards the Balkan and the Black Sea regions? Which role Türkiye was expected to play in Romania’s security equation? Was a Romanian-Turkish alliance possible and in which way such a reality could have changed the regional dynamics? These are just some of the questions to be answered based on the available documentation existing in the Romanian and foreign (American) archives. Undoubtedly,

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¹ Grigore Gafencu, *Însemnări politice*, (București: Humanitas, 1991), p. 340.

a major concern of Bucharest in 1939 was focused on Türkiye's potential behavior and its actions in the event of an aggression by the USSR against Romania. This dilemma significantly shaped the military relations between Romania and Türkiye and their mutual understanding of the limits and constraints upon their freedom of action in the year that marked the outbreak of the world conflagration.

Keywords: Alliance, Balkan Region, Black Sea, Straits, Türkiye, War.

1. Romania's Security Policy and the Role of Türkiye in 1939

The bilateral relations between the two countries developed in 1939 prove not only the complexity of the interests shared by the two allies, but the limits and constraints that they had to deal with under the pressure of changing the hegemonic power game. It must be emphasized from the beginning that Romania faced a particularly complicated strategic situation being surrounded by revisionist powers in three directions: Russia in the east, Hungary in the west and Bulgaria in the south. The fact that two thirds of its extended borders were under potential threat was to become a real challenge for the military and political decision-makers all the more so as the disputed frontiers were located in divergent directions, very remote to each other and all together raising specific difficulties. This was to become known at the time as the "Romanian strategic problem" ("Problemul strategic românesc"). In the wake of the Second World War, a study issued by the General Staff called "Study on Romania's current military problem" concluded that: "With all the forces at its disposal, Romania could not attempt to resist on the vast circle of 2000 sq km formed by its attacked frontiers".² The strategy adopted by Bucharest was to establish a network of regional alliances closely connected to the two major Western allies, France and Great Britain. Beginning in 1937-1938, and particularly after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in 1938, the Romanian security construct became extremely vulnerable.

² Petre Otu, "Evolutia reformei de la un razboi la altul (1919-1939). Experienta Primului Razboi Mondial si procesul de reforma pe plan European" [The evolution of reform from one war to another 1919-1939. The Experience of the First World War and the reform process at the European level], *Reforma Militara si Societatea in Romania (1878-2008)*, ed. Petre Otu. (Bucuresti: Editura Militara, 2009), pp. 52-155. Petre Otu, "Dimensiuni si caracteristici ale strategiei militare romanesti (1919-1939)", *Strategia militara in epoca moderna, 1877-2000*, ed. Valentin Arsene, (Bucuresti: Nummus, 1999), pp. 82-132.

It was unclear how far the Anglo-French appeasement policy would go, which would be the next direction of German aggression, and what the USSR's intentions were. In all possible scenarios, it was of particular priority for Romania to maintain free passage through the straits and, implicitly, a close cooperation with Türkiye, one of Bucharest's most important regional allies. The experience of World War I (WWI) substantially shaped the strategic thinking of both Bucharest and Ankara. As part of this experience, Romania was well aware that the Black Sea was the only safe gateway to the Western allies for supplies and support and any change in the Black Sea status-quo would have left the country isolated and exposed to the revisionist neighboring countries.

The pressures on Romania on the German-Soviet axis increased significantly in the second half of the 1930s, especially after the Munich Dictate of September 1938. The territorial demands of the USSR in the east³, along with Bulgarian and Hungarian revisionist claims on south-western directions, against the backdrop of rising Germany and uncertain Western intentions, left Romania with few geopolitical options. To counter the new emerging geopolitical turmoil, Bucharest sought to accommodate the German interests while keeping its Western security commitments. This is why, the Bucharest government has tried to avoid actions that could raise tensions with Berlin or provoke a German aggressive reaction. The trade agreement that was signed in March 1939 effectively connected the German and Romanian economies. Romania promised to provide Germany with significant economic benefits in exchange for maintaining its political freedom. Furthermore, Romania became aware that Germany was to play a critical role in keeping both Hungary and the Soviet Union in check. Facing a complicated equation of threats along its borders, it was believed Berlin might use its already growing influence to restrain the revisionist neighbors and protect the country's territorial integrity. Bucharest was faced with a significant dilemma as a result of this new reality that involved balancing the need to uphold defense ties to the Western allies with the mounting German pressure.

³ The USSR never recognized the provisions of the Paris Treaty of 28 October 1920 admitting the union of Bessarabia with Romania as it considered Bessarabia to be part of Russian territory, having been conquered by the Russian Empire in 1812. Throughout the inter-war years, the Soviet Union remained hostile to Romania threatening the territorial integrity of the country and trying to generate instability along the Romanian eastern border.

Within this strategic configuration, a particularly important direction of Romanian foreign policy concerned the relationship with Türkiye, and here we must consider two critical points: the first was the necessity to safeguard the Balkan region and ensure the Turkish commitment to the mutual defense clause within the Balkan Entente; the second was to maintain the passage via the Black Sea straits as the main access gate if Romania becomes an object of invasion. Both countries were interested in staying out of the hegemonic confrontation and countering Germany's capacity to expand its control and influence threatening their own independence. However, for Romania was equally important to find a way to deter the Soviet threat and counter Soviet revisionist demands.

In April 1939, France and Great Britain granted defense guarantees to Romania. It should be noted that these guarantees had a unilateral character and excluded any similar responsibilities from Romania.⁴ The Romanian side made use of this fact to refute the criticism emanating from Berlin hoping also to get the same kind of guarantees from Germany. Bucharest understood, however, that the Anglo-French guarantees were difficult to put into action without Türkiye's participation and its willingness to ensure the access route for the Franco-British ships in the Black Sea to aid Romania in case of war.

In a general perspective, Romania's security objectives regarding Türkiye can be deciphered on several coordinates: (1) developing a coordinating agenda of actions based on a shared strategy to keep the two countries out of the conflict zone; (2) safeguarding the stability of the Balkan area by consolidating and expanding the Balkan Entente; (3) ensuring a channel of communication with the USSR to mitigate Moscow's revisionist temptations; (4) keeping free movement through the straits for Anglo-French vessels, vital to operationalize the guarantees granted to Romania by Paris and London in April 1939 in case of war.

As far as Turkey is concerned, its strategy, in the context of accelerating regional turmoil, has been to assume a neutral status as the

⁴ The declarations by the British and French Governments were designed to offset the German occupation of Prague and the Italian occupation of Albania, and promised support if the independence of Greece or Romania were threatened to such an extent that the Greek or Romanian Governments considered it vital to resist with national forces. Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1951, The Near East and Africa, Volume V, *Memorandum by Henry S. Villard to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze)*, [Washington] March 1, 1951, pp. 1126-1127, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v05/d643>.

safest course of action to protect its independence and security interests. Therefore, its overall agenda of actions has been shaped by the critical need to maintain neutrality and avoid being dragged into a major conflict. The leaders believed that the Anglo-Saxon nations would prevail in a future confrontation and that it would be in their best interests to stick with the Western allies.⁵ However, the risk of German penetration into the Balkans and Black Sea region has increased as a result of the new geopolitical posture reached by Berlin in South-East Europe following the 1938 Munich Diktat. Stopping the German advance and preventing a potential conflict from spreading to Türkiye's region of immediate concern, namely the straits, were primary priorities for the Ankara government. In order to accomplish this goal, Ankara's policy focused on both securing the Western backing and engaging Soviet Russia in the overall efforts of preserving the Black Sea status quo. At the same time, special attention was paid to the stability of the Balkan region, having as its central pillar the Balkan Entente signed in 1934. As a result of these efforts, a connection with Romania naturally grew since both countries had a common agenda of objectives regarding the security on the Balkans-Black Sea axis seeking to keep it out of possible major military confrontation. The main challenge to the Romanian-Turkish security relationship was Turkey's approach to the Soviet Union and its attempts to reconcile the alliance with Russia with the Balkan Entente and with its defense commitments to Balkan allies, including Romania. Since Atatürk's times, Türkiye and the Soviet Union have maintained tight relations based on their mutual interests in preserving the Black Sea status quo and ensuring their regional dominance in the area. Unlike Romania, there was no Turkish-Soviet territorial dispute, and there was no direct danger from Moscow that could raise the problem of Turkish national territorial integrity. The alliance with Russia shaped through the "Turkish-Soviet Non-Aggression and Friendship Agreement", concluded on December 17, 1925, and remained throughout the inter-war years a major coordinate of Türkiye's foreign policy.

Türkiye was especially concerned with the potential intentions of Italy in the Mediterranean and German ambitions in the Balkans. To counter these possible developments, Ankara had an ambitious project: to link France, Great Britain and USRR through defense assistance agreements having Türkiye as the connecting vector while supporting the

⁵ Brock Millman, "Turkish Foreign and Strategic Policy 1934-1942", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Jul. 1995), p. 490.

consolidation of the Balkan Entente as the main stability factor in the Balkans. As Şükrü Saracoğlu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, put it:

“It is a necessity that between the Anglo-French power, which is at the entrance of the Dardanelles, and the Russian one, which is at the mouth of the Bosphorus, there should be no antagonism, even during the conflagration.”⁶

As early as April 1939, the Romanian side was informed, during the discussions with the French leaders in Paris, that Türkiye was particularly interested in two issues: assuming a public declaration of neutrality in the event of a conflict in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, and ensuring that Russia will be part of a common assistance system with France and Great Britain.⁷ Romania asked Türkiye to clarify its position as regards the participation of Soviet Russia in such a system. Turkish minister Saracoğlu insisted on the need to construct an eastern front capable of resisting a German aggression. According to the Turkish vision, this front was to be built on three primary pillars: Romania, Turkey, and Poland, with the assistance of England and France. However, the success of such a project would not have been possible without the engagement of Russia, “if not an ally, at least a benevolent one...which will not be manipulated against us”.⁸

The Turkish course of action found support in both Paris and London. In April 1939, Bucharest acknowledged that the French government also considered that Poland, Romania, Turkey, and the USSR would soon establish a system of mutual help.⁹ Turkish plan raised both hopes and concerns in Bucharest since such a defense project, would create a barrier against revisionist neighbors, but could also create a complicated

⁶ Arhivele Diplomatice ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe/Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter AMAE), Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegram Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, May 1, 1939, Ankara, f. 170.

⁷ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare Speciale, 1939, Vol. 399, *Deciphered telegram signed Grigore Gafencu*, April 28, 1939, Paris, f. 98-99.

⁸ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegram Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, May 1, 1939, Ankara, f. 169.

⁹ FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1939, General, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State*, Paris, April 28, 1939, f. 160 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1939v01/d157>.

situation for Romania struggling to keep a balance between the West and Germany while finding ways to deter the growing Soviet threat. To make things worse, Germany warned Bucharest to refrain from actions that could be interpreted as being directed against Germany or aiming at encircling Germany in the south. This is why, the Turkish-Soviet relations and the concept for a defense system involving the Soviet Union created significant dilemmas in Bucharest. From Bucharest's standpoint, it was crucial to avoid any acts that would have called into question the balance that was supposed to be maintained in order to lessen German susceptibilities. Romania's approach was formulated by Foreign Minister Gafencu in the discussions with the French leaders at the end of April 1939: "our peace policy, faithful to our Western friends, does not understand supporting either Germany against Russia, or Russia against Germany".¹⁰ In other words, Romania did not want to be drawn into a general assistance system centered on Russia, which may have jeopardized relations with Germany while adding little value to the guarantees gained from Western nations.¹¹ The Romanian government did not rule out possible military assistance, including from Russia, in the event of a broad confrontation, but it was critical to avoid putting the country's name in any prospective anti-German regional defense project.

The Turkish leaders were concerned with the fate of Romania, whose capacity for resistance could significantly influence the geography of security in the Balkans and the Black Sea. It was not just about Germany gaining access to critical supplies for the duration of the war if Romania was defeated, but it would have left Poland in a "fatal situation and would facilitate the descent of aggression towards the Aegean and the Straits".¹² President İnönü even met with the ambassadors of Poland, France, and the United Kingdom to secure their assistance if Romania become the victim of aggression. Ankara was particularly keen on involving Romania in several regional schemes and finding ways to strengthen the bilateral coordination in line with Turkish concerns. Against this background, the

¹⁰ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare speciale, 1939, Vol. 399, *Deciphered telegram sent by Grigore Gafencu*, April 28, 1939, Paris, ff. 97-98.

¹¹ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare speciale, 1939, Vol. 399, *Deciphered telegram sent by Grigore Gafencu*, April 25, 1939, London, ff.9-10.

¹² AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Rapoarte Ankara-Istanbul, 1939-1944, Vol. 10. *Notes of the meeting between King Carol II and President of the Republic of Türkiye, İsmet İnönü*, Istanbul, f. 151.

Turkish officials paid special attention to the Poland-Romania-Türkiye axis.¹³ In his view, the Romanian-Polish alliance had to be extended to cover a possible aggression from the West (Germany) making at the same time possible a détente policy between Romania, Poland and the Soviet Union. The Turkish president reconfirmed, in fact, Türkiye's stance arguing for the need to build an Eastern front able to rely on Russia.¹⁴

Türkiye as a channel of communication between Bucharest and Moscow

When the Romanian and Turkish foreign ministers, G. Gafencu and Ş. Saracoğlu, met in June 1939, and they both expressed the willingness to work together to improve ties with their respective neighbors. Romania was asked by Türkiye to negotiate improved ties between Poland and Türkiye, while Türkiye was asked to help improve ties between Romania and the USSR.¹⁵

The issue of the Romanian-Turkish-Soviet triangle became a critical factor in the dynamic of the relations between Bucharest and Ankara during 1939 with Türkiye facing the challenge of finding a compromise between the Romanian-Turkish cooperation and Romanian-Soviet hostility. In 1939, Bucharest launched an ample diplomatic offensive towards Ankara in order to strengthen the Romanian-Turkish cooperation and coordinate their regional agendas. A specific point of interest for Bucharest was the possibility of improving relations with the Soviets with Turkish assistance. As Bucharest made clear, Romania did not intend to enter into a security arrangement with the Soviet Union unless the territorial issues were settled. The advantages of Bucharest-Ankara diplomatic efforts have been stated clearly by Prime Minister Armand Călinescu: enhancing ties with Turkey; strengthening Franco-English guarantees and facilitating an improvement in relations with the Soviets.

¹³ King Carol II expressed reservations that such an axis would be effective, noting Poland's stance as a major issue, given the country's special links with Hungary, which were well known in Bucharest.

¹⁴ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare speciale, 1939, Vol. 400, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu, detailing his meeting with the President of the Republic of Türkiye İsmet İnönü*, Ankara, June 15, 1939, ff. 163-166.

¹⁵ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu detailing his visit to Ankara*, Yalova, June 14-15, 1939, ff. 272-274.

In the words of Armand Călinescu, “I would like a non-aggression pact with them (the Soviets n.a.), if they formally recognize Bessarabia”.¹⁶

King Carol II’s visit to Türkiye and his talks with the country’s president İsmet İnönü, on August 11, 1939, allow us to better understand the challenges of the Romanian-Soviet-Turkish strategic equation. Bucharest was interested in sending clear messages to Moscow via the Turkish side based on several considerations: Romania had a friendly attitude toward Russia; she has refused to participate in any grouping or action directed against Russia; and, through its resistance policy, Romania effectively secures Russia’s southern border. In fact, Romania wanted to indicate to Moscow that having a friend on its southern borders is advantageous, and, this is why, Romania’s eastern frontiers (Bessarabia) must not be jeopardized.¹⁷ At the King’s request, Saracoğlu agreed to explore in Moscow the possibility of a Romanian-Soviet non-aggression pact, which would be conditional on the recognition of Bessarabia by Moscow.¹⁸ In addition, as proved by the existing documentary records, Bucharest sought to persuade Türkiye that the Romanian-Soviet territorial dispute is a critical security priority for both countries. The message from Romania was clear: Bessarabia was not just a Romanian concern; it also had wider ramifications for the stability of south-east Europe as a whole and, therefore, Türkiye should support Romania’s diplomatic efforts with the Soviet Union. In Bucharest line of argumentation, how the Dniester border problem was handled with the Soviets will influence the Soviet attitude toward Türkiye and the Straits.

As King Carol II put it in his talks with the Turkish President, İsmet İnönü:

“The full recognition of the Dniester border, and hence the acceptance of Bessarabia’s reunification with the motherland, would contribute to reducing suspicion and opening the door to other beneficial accords and collaboration. Recognizing this border

¹⁶ Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări Politice*, (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1990), p. 420.

¹⁷ AMAE, Fond 21, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegram Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, Ankara, 10 July, 1939, ff. 317.

¹⁸ AMAE, Fond 21, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegram Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, Ankara, July 10, 1939, ff. 317-318; see also Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări Politice*, p. 424.

is also in Turkey's best interests. Previous experience has also taught us that the further Turkey gets from Constantinople, the more free it is in its property and politics."¹⁹

In Ankara, King Carol II explained the complicated strategic-military condition facing Romania and hence the need to ease the Soviet pressures. Due to the unpredictable Soviet behavior, Romania had to divide its forces to cover both the western and the eastern directions. This made it impossible to concentrate the military effort to the west to thwart a potential Hungarian, German-Hungarian, or German-Hungarian-Italian aggression. Forces had to be spread out widely and in diverse directions in response to the Soviet threat. It became all the more important for Bucharest to have certainty about future Soviet intentions. In addition, Türkiye's support, which could mediate a response, was extremely helpful. Romania's condition was clear: the USSR should recognize the common border on the Dniester.²⁰ Turkey's involvement could also act as an assurance that Russia would honor its potential commitments. However, King Carol II acknowledged in his talks with the Turkish president the deep mistrust, which shaped the history of the Romanian-Soviet relations:

"The experience of the past shows us that, as many times as the Romanians were allies of the Russians and collaborated with them, they were always deceived and suffered territorial amputations. That is why Romania refuses to let the Russian army onto its territory, even if it comes to fight alongside the Romanian army."²¹

It was obvious that Romania's worries would be difficult to reconcile with Turkey's geopolitical thinking, which considered Russia as its most significant ally in the Black Sea. It should be mentioned that during the year of 1939, the Romanian and Soviet parties advanced several initiatives via the Turkish channel of communication. The USSR proposed Romania join a Black Sea Pact²², a proposal that was met with skepticism

¹⁹ AMAE, *Notes of the meeting between King Carol II and President of the Republic of Türkiye, İsmet İnönü*, August 14, 1939, Istanbul, f.156.

²⁰ AMAE, *Notes of King Carol II following his meeting with President İsmet İnönü held on 11 August 1939*, August 14, 1939, Istanbul, f. 155-156.

²¹ AMAE, *Ibid*, f. 156.

²² AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, *Telegrame Ankara. 1935-1939*, Vol. 1, *Deciphered telegram set by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu* (on his way to Istanbul), June 15, 1939, f. 272.

in Bucharest. Romania's position remained unchanged: obtaining an unambiguous declaration of recognition of Bessarabia as a precondition of any further discussion on such an issue.²³ Since Moscow maintained its position vis-à-vis the Romanian eastern border, Gafencu informed the Romanian Embassy in Ankara on July 13, 1939, that there was "neither direct nor indirect" willingness to engage with Russia for membership in a Black Sea Pact.²⁴ In fact, the Romanian Foreign Minister did not trust that any commitment made by the Soviet Union to France and England would be kept. It was yet another reason why Romania could not enter into any direct defensive arrangement with the Soviet Union as suggested by President İnönü. Furthermore, Hitler made clear and warned Bucharest that if Romania should enter into a pact with the Soviet Union it would be the end of friendly relations between Germany and Romania and had implied that Germany would attack Romania at once.²⁵

The conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, triggered a geopolitical shock wave. Both countries have been forced to review their own strategic options and their agendas of actions. For Romania, the Soviet-German pact created a critical situation. Bucharest's strategy of accommodating Germany to counter the Soviet menace was effective as long as the two hegemonic powers remained adversaries and hostile to each other. Although Bucharest was unaware of the Pact's Secret Annex, which affirms Germany's consent for the Soviet takeover of Bessarabia, it was acknowledged that a Soviet aggression against Romania was now likely. Which options were left for Romania? And how much support was to be expected from the Western allies and from Türkiye?

The German-Soviet Pact of August 1939 resulted in a policy shift in Ankara. The Turkish side notified Bucharest that a defense pact involving France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union was no longer feasible. As a result, Türkiye focused its attention on a new course

²³ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, July 10, 1939, Ankara, ff. 314-315.

²⁴ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu, to the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica*, July 13, 1939, Ankara, f. 323.

²⁵ FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1939, General, Volume I, *Telegram sent by the US Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the State Secretary*, Paris, April 29, 1939, f. 176, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1939v01/pg_176.

of action centered on the completion of two defense plans: one to be concluded with France and Great Britain, the other with the Soviet Union. Türkiye intended for the Turkish-Russian deal to serve as a bridge between existing agreements with France and the United Kingdom. The Russo-Turkish pact had a different character after August 23, 1939, being purely bilateral, but the Turkish side was convinced that even in this form, it would be well received in Paris and London because it somehow linked the USSR to the two Western powers through Türkiye's mediation.²⁶ The ultimate goal was to build a strategy to allow it to stay out of the conflict and keep its options free regarding both the Western and the Soviet directions.

Romania watched closely the Soviet-Turkish negotiations and, especially important, to get some assurances that the content of the deal would not leave Romania exposed to Soviet aggressive intentions. Particularly important was the way in which the Turkish and Soviet parts would negotiate the status-quo in the Black Sea and the Balkans and how the possible bilateral deal would affect the Turkish commitments to France and Great Britain. For Bucharest, unrestricted passage through the Straits has become an existential security concern. This issue, combined with mounting worries of the Soviet invasion against Romania, elevated Turkey to the forefront of Romania's geopolitical calculus. The Soviet demands were guided by precise objectives. According to the information received by Bucharest, the defensive pact that the Soviet Union proposed to Turkey only considered the territories of the two countries in the Black Sea basin. The Russians wanted to keep their freedom of action in the territories beyond this boundary. In such a way, it could avoid the responsibility to maintain the territorial integrity of Balkan states, particularly Romania.²⁷ The access of non-riparian fleet to the Black Sea was not allowed, hence the request to the Turkish side that, in the event of a war between the Soviet Union and France and Great Britain, the fleet belonging to these states should not be allowed to pass through the Straits. Such a hypothesis was especially dangerous for Romania. In case of a Russian aggression,

²⁶ AMAE, Fond 21, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Deciphered telegram sent by the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica*, September 12, 1939, ff. 395-396.

²⁷ AMAE, Fond 21, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Deciphered telegram sent by Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica*, September 9, 1939, September, f. 87.

Romania could remain isolated and deprived of supplies. Bucharest tried to persuade the Turks not to fall into the Soviet trap. The argument of the Romanian ambassador in Ankara was that Istanbul was not defending itself at Adrianople, but at “our and Yugoslav borders against the Germans and Hungarians, and on the Dniester against the Russians”.²⁸

From Türkiye’s perspective, it was clear that the German-Soviet Pact served Soviet interests as it was recognized that a conflict including Germany, Poland, France, and Great Britain would be advantageous to Russia. A treaty with France and the United Kingdom may have avoided war, which does not appear to be in Moscow’s best interests.²⁹ Based on that assumption, Ankara came to wrongly believe that the USSR has no interest in starting a war or to get into a conflict with its neighbors. The Pact with Germany was, in fact, the result of Russia’s peaceful intentions. Against this backdrop, the news received from Moscow via the Turkish channel was reassuring. However, Türkiye’s key interest was to avoid any possible regional complications that could involve its Soviet ally. This is why the Turkish side raised the issue of possible Romanian concessions to lessen Soviet pressure. According to the discussion held by the Romanian ambassador in Ankara with the Foreign Minister, Ş. Saracoglu, the Turkish official believed that the Soviet Government may now be somewhat more cautious in its approach to the Bessarabia question and endeavor to obtain that region by agreement with Romania rather than by force, even though such agreement may entail concessions from Romania.³⁰

2. Searching for Balkan Neutrality

Romania and Turkey had a regional vision that was centered on two fundamental goals: the first was to maintain neutrality in a potential conflict between the great powers and, the second, was to avoid turning the Black Sea -Balkan nexus into a theater of war. As a result, both countries focused on strengthening the Balkan Entente able to forge a consolidated

²⁸ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, October 9, 1939, Ankara, ff. 431

²⁹ AMAE, *Deciphered telegram sent by the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica*, September 12, 1939, ff. 394.

³⁰ FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1939, General, Volume I, *Telegram sent by the US Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt) to the State Secretary*, Moscow, October 17, 1939, f. 176, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1939v01/d505>.

south-eastern front to resist aggression and secure the Balkan security against the revisionist neighbors, Bulgaria being a critical case in point. During the year of 1939, there were concentrated efforts to advance their mutual regional agenda. However, the geopolitical postures shared by the two countries had their own particularities as Romania was compelled to balance its objectives with the complex geopolitical realities as a result of increasing German pressure.

The Anglo-Turkish common declaration, announced on May 12, 1939, was to have significant implications for Romania's strategic posture. Basically, the declaration stated that the two signatory countries would hold negotiations in order to complete a long-term mutual assistance treaty. According to Article 3, Türkiye pledged to open the Straits to British vessels in the event that France and the United Kingdom had to come to Romania's aid in accordance with the April 24, 1939 security guarantees. Paragraph 6 of the declaration, the United Kingdom and Türkiye recognize the importance of preserving Balkan stability and will consult with one another on the measures to be taken to achieve this goal.³¹ The article 3 of the British-Turkish declaration safeguarded access through the straits, a key priority for Bucharest. However, the inclusion of the Balkans in the paragraph 6 was contrary to Bucharest's regional agenda, which was significantly influenced by the imperative of avoiding German hostility and preserving the status of neutrality of the Balkan Entente.

The declaration was seen by the Germans as the end of Turkish neutrality, a dynamic that called the entire status of the Balkan Entente into doubt. From a German perspective, Turkey's status of neutrality cannot be maintained once it joined a Western security system. German pressure on Bucharest escalated as a result of the Turkish-British-French declarations, as Berlin claimed that Bucharest had joined the containment strategy the West had developed in the Balkans against Germany through the Turkish actions.³² Minister Gafencu insisted in his talks with Paris, London and Ankara about the need to preserve the independence of the Balkan Entente in the emerging great power crisis.³³ Furthermore, during his June 1939

³¹ Rebecca Haynes, *Politica României față de Germania între 1936 și 1940*, trans. Cristina Abobaie, (Bucuresti: Polirom, 2003), pp. 109-110.

³² Rebecca Haynes, *Politica României față de Germania între 1936 și 1940*, p. 112.

³³ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare Speciale, 1939, Vol. 400, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu, to the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica*, May 22, 1939, Ankara, ff. 17-20.

visit to Ankara, Gafencu asked Minister Saracoğlu to remove paragraph 6 from the British-Turkish declaration and to avoid any further mention of Balkan security in their diplomatic initiatives with the Western powers.³⁴ Despite Bucharest's efforts and the Turkish initial agreement, the French-Turkish declaration of mutual support in the Mediterranean retained the original paragraph 6. Bucharest has tried to soften up German apprehensions but, at the same time, Turkish efforts were acknowledged as meeting Romania's security demands, while the Romanian-Turkish cooperation remained an important pillar of Balkan security. In the words of Minister Grigore Gafencu:

“Romania and Turkey have strong, dependable ties. I'll do my utmost to protect and fortify them. Due to its location in the Straits and the fact that it is a dependable and helpful ally in light of the problematic circumstances in Bulgaria, Turkey is also necessary to us. We cannot allow our relationships with Turkey to deteriorate because our Turkish friends have grown closer to our English friends. Romania's strategy is to develop and sincerely strengthen new friendships rather than toss off its long-standing relationships.”³⁵

Bucharest was particularly concerned about growing German pressures to shape the internal dynamic within the Balkan Entente. The issue of Yugoslavia was a major concern since it was well understood that any weakness in the Balkan Entente could push her closer to Germany. Additionally, Germany might support Bulgaria's revisionist actions, creating a significant challenge to the Balkan alliance. While Romania was rather concerned that the new Western-Turkish dynamic could weaken the cohesion and unity of the Balkan Entente, Ankara held a slightly different perspective as it was believed that the Turkish-British Mutual Assistance Agreement was an effective strategy that might enhance the security and role of the Balkan Entente.³⁶

³⁴ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare Speciale. 1939, Vol. 400, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu presenting his visit in Ankara*, June 14-15, 1939, Yalova, ff. 149-151.

³⁵ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare Speciale, 1939, Vol. 400, *Note on the discussions between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu, and the German Minister, Wilhelm Fabricius*, June 9, 1939, Bucharest, ff. 85-86.

³⁶ AMAE, Fond Ankara, Vol. 6 bis, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, June 2, 1939, Ankara.

The enduring problem for Romanian-Turkish policy was Bulgarian's revisionist claims and, hence, its reluctance to subscribe to the Balkan Pact aiming at preserving the territorial status-quo. The solution supported by Ankara was to find a way to accommodate the main revisionist countries, Bulgaria and Hungary and bring them into the Balkan security system.³⁷ The biggest challenges were generated by the territorial dispute between Romania and Bulgaria, as well as Russia's ambitions in the region. On 15 April 1939, the Romanian Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, informed Bucharest about Minister Saracoğlu's proposal to invite Bulgaria to join the Balkan Pact as a full member and resolve the disputes between Bulgaria and its neighbours through mediations of the other three member states of the Balkan Pact. The Ambassador advised Bucharest to accept the Turkish proposal in general terms while categorically excluding the question of changing the borders.³⁸

The issue of Bulgaria's territorial claims over Dobrudja highly complicated the Turkish negotiations with Sofia on the future enlargement of the Balkan Entente. Ankara's attempts to mediate between Romania and Bulgaria failed since Bucharest refused to accept Bulgaria's demands over Dobrudja. Following his visit to Ankara in June 1939, Minister Gafencu informed that the Turks accepted Romania's proposal to completely close the chapter of the talks with Bulgaria.³⁹ The Balkan Entente remained a viable framework of close collaboration and consultations between Romania and Turkey during the year 1939. The main issue in Bucharest was upholding Turkey's obligations about the defense clause to be operationalized in the event of a southern aggression. On 14 April 1939, the military attaché in Ankara, Lieutenant Colonel Traian Teodorescu informed the General Staff on the military scenarios debated by the Turkish General Staff. The main concern for the Turkish military was a possible joint action of Italy and Bulgaria against Greece and an Italian action on Türkiye. Within this conflictual geography, Türkiye was

³⁷ FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1939, General, Vol. I, *Minister in Romania (Gunther) to the Secretary of State*, September 28, 1939, Bucharest, ff. 456-457, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1939v01/d470>.

³⁸ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, April 15, 1939, Ankara, ff. 135-136.

³⁹ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare Speciale. 1939, Vol. 400, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu presenting his visit in Ankara*, June 14-15, 1939, Yalova, ff. 149-151.

regarded by Bucharest as the country's sole reliable Balkan ally, considering that, in the case of a war with multiple fronts, Bulgaria must be eliminated first, with Türkiye's military aid.⁴⁰

In the wake of the German and Soviet invasion of Poland, Türkiye and Romania stepped up their efforts to create a bloc of neutrals in the Balkans to stop the war from spreading to the south. For Romania was equally important to lessen Germany's concerns regarding the credibility of the neutrality commitments of the Balkan countries and the establishment of a bloc of neutrals could serve such a goal. There was also a major concern in Bucharest that Bulgaria's revisionist actions could be exploited by the Soviet Union. On 20 September, the Romanian Ambassador in Ankara informed Minister Gafencu that Minister Saracoğlu saw such a bloc as a tool able to secure peace and stability in the Balkans against any external aggression. London and Paris have been also consulted by Ankara, and both countries agreed to endorse the plan. Loyal to its policy of fair balance, Türkiye argued that Moscow must also be consulted. Despite the optimism expressed by the Turkish side, Bucharest remained cautious regarding a positive answer from Moscow. In the words of the Romanian Ambassador: "I must add, however, that their (the Turks a.n.) optimism over the Soviet Union's love of peace was not always confirmed".⁴¹

Romania's reluctance was more realistic than the Turkish hopes. Moscow's acceptance of such a plan was highly unlikely because it would have put a stop to its southward expansionist intentions. It should be mentioned here the fact that on September 21, before his travel to Moscow, Minister Saracoğlu was still convinced that between the Soviet Union and Germany, apart from the non-aggression pact, there is no other commitment or, if there is, it does not extend to Romania and does not concern its interests and integrity.⁴²

⁴⁰ AMAE, Fond 71/1920-1944, Dosare Speciale, vol 347, 1939, *Telegram of the military attaché in Ankara, Lieutenant colonel Traian Teodorescu, to the General Staff*, April 14, 1939, Ankara, ff. 87-91.

⁴¹ AMAE, Fond Ankara, Vol. 6 bis, Ankara. *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, September 20, 1939.

⁴² AMAE, Fond Ankara, Vol. 6 bis, Ankara. *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, September 21, 1939.

On 18 October, Bucharest insisted on finding out what is Turkey's response to a possible inclusion of Italy and Hungary in the neutral bloc.⁴³ A potential Italy's membership was fully supported by Ankara, which informed Bucharest it should have equal rights as a member of the planned bloc.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the plan failed as a result of Bulgaria's refusal to enter the Balkan Pact and Italy's refusal to assume the lead role of the neutral countries. Towards the end of 1939, Bucharest suggested to Ankara an even more ambitious plan that would have transformed the neutral bloc project into a defensive assistance pact. However, given the challenges both inside and outside the Balkans, such a scenario was viewed by Ankara as highly unlikely even impossible to implement.⁴⁵

3. Facing the War. The Romanian-Turkish Relations at Crossroad

The breaking out of the war on September 1, 1939 put new pressures on the two countries. Both Romania and Türkiye attempted to adapt their positions in the aftermath of the German invasion of Poland. On September 2, 1939, the Romanian ambassador in Ankara notified that the Foreign Minister Saracoğlu reconfirmed the decision to uphold the agreements with France, England (and keep the Straits open), and the Balkan Pact, resulting, however, in their use only in the event of a Mediterranean or Balkan conflict. The positioning of Italy was particularly critical for Türkiye. It was agreed that if Italy entered the war, Türkiye would respond proportionately. The neutrality of Italy would have kept Türkiye out of the war.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the Soviet-German Pact significantly altered both countries' existing strategic calculations. Romania declared its neutrality on September 6, 1939, without abandoning the Anglo-French guarantees despite the growing German pressures. The position of Türkiye became especially important under the conditions of

⁴³ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu, to the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica*, October 18, 1939, Bucharest, f. 447.

⁴⁴ AMAE, Fond Ankara, Vol. 6 bis, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, December 2, 1939, Ankara.

⁴⁵ AMAE, Fond Ankara, Vol. 6 bis, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, December 2, 1939, Ankara.

⁴⁶ MAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, September 2, 1939, f. 370.

the collapse of Poland. On September 2, 1939, the Romanian ambassador in Ankara, V. Stoica, intervened to secure Türkiye's agreement to maintain open access for the transfer of materials needed for Poland, the Black Sea becoming the only possible route after the German fleet's expansion in the Baltic and North Seas.⁴⁷

The Russian invasion of Poland on September 17, heightened Romanians' fears of a Soviet military intervention against Romania. The prospects of Soviet aggression and the collapse of Poland pushed Romania close to Germany seen as the only power able to secure the country against an aggressive Russia. The geopolitical realities worsened dramatically leaving Romania in a strategic vacuum as she tried to avoid being dragged into the war or become a victim of aggression.

A particularly important episode in the dynamic of Romanian-Turkish relations was the signing of the Anglo-French-Turkish agreement of October 19, 1939.⁴⁸ The document concluded in October 1939 was significant for Romania in that it guaranteed the passage of ally vessels across the straits in case that Romania required help in the event of aggression. However, real concerns were expressed in Bucharest in two directions: regarding Germany's possible reaction and the exact content of the agreement's text, which specifically referred to paragraph 1 of article 2 of the Turkish-French-British agreement (the so-called "Russian clause"). The main issue was the fact that the trilateral agreement did not consider the activation of the treaty in case of Soviet aggression. The negotiations between Türkiye and the Soviet Union raised serious

⁴⁷ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, September 2, 1939, f. 372.

⁴⁸ The Treaty of Mutual Assistance between Great Britain, France and Turkey was signed October 19, 1939. Article 3 of the treaty provides that Türkiye will give France and Britain "all aid and assistance in her power" should France and Britain, in fulfillment of their declarations of April 13, 1939 with respect to Rumania and Greece, be called upon to defend those countries against attack. FRUS, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Vol. V. f. 1127, *Türkiye's position in the East-West Struggle*, National Intelligence Estimate, Washington, February 26, 1951, f. 1127.

https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v05/pg_1127; Ibid, Memorandum by Henry S. Villard to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze), Washington, March 1, 1951.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v05/d643#:~:text=The%20Treaty%20of%20Mutual%20Assistance,the%20latter%20by%20a%20European.>

apprehensions in Bucharest which was especially concerned about the way in which Türkiye was going to act in case of Soviet aggression against Romania. Bucharest acknowledged the fact that the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of 17 December 1925 limited the Turkish engagement in support of Romania.⁴⁹ As a result, Türkiye's responsibility to provide assistance would be null and void in the event that Russia attacked Romania unilaterally or in concert with Germany and Hungary.⁵⁰

The same dilemma shaped Romania's agenda regarding the relations with France and Great Britain. What position will be adopted in case of Soviet aggression against Romania? The appliance of "the Russian clause" would leave Romania fully exposed to the threat coming from the East. Bucharest was also afraid that Moscow would attempt to convince Ankara to close the Straits to the allied vessels.

A month earlier, on September 19, 1939, the Romanian Ambassador in Ankara met with Minister Saracoğlu to discuss a prospective Black Sea Pact formed as a Turkish-Soviet Pact open to other countries that may like to join. The initiative was seen as a pact of mutual assistance against aggression that would occur in the Black Sea basin on one of the two contracting parties that would endanger their vital interests in this area. From the Turkish perspective, a Black Sea Pact between Türkiye and the Soviet Union may facilitate a peaceful policy between Moscow and the Balkan Entente, which was also in Romania's best interests. Romanian answer to Türkiye's proposal was a positive one mentioning that in the current context when the German-Soviet antagonism was replaced by cooperation, Bucharest was more open to such

⁴⁹ The Turkish-Soviet Non-Aggression and Friendship Agreement Treaty, signed on December 17, 1925, clarifies the fact that the two sides would not attack each other; if one side would be attacked by a third country, the other would remain neutral, both sides would not make political arrangements against each other and they would consult and inform each other before they sign an agreement with a third country.

⁵⁰ Arhivele Militare Nationale Romane/ Romanian National Military Archives (hereafter AMNR), Fond Ministerul de Război, Marele Stat Major, Secția a 2-a Informații, 1896-1949, rola 69, cadre 160-164, *Study made by the General Staff*, 3^e Section, Bureau of Military Conventions on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance between Great Britain, France and Türkiye signed in Ankara on October 19, 1939, October 23, 1939, Bucharest, ff. 391-395.

an idea.⁵¹ In fact, the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact raised a new dilemma in Bucharest. In theory, the shift from hostility to cooperation emerged in the German-Soviet relations, open new prospects for Bucharest to reach to Moscow without causing German apprehensions. In practice, it allowed the Soviet Union to exert itself against Romania. Moscow had lost interest (if any) in conciliating Romania after achieving its goal of seizing Bessarabia, which became a reality in June 1940. The Turkish-Soviet alliance made any intervention unlikely in the event of a direct Romano-Soviet confrontation, and Russia was aware that Romania could not rely on the help of France, Türkiye, or the United Kingdom. Everything that followed on the Soviet side was merely a game of appearances.

The Molotov-Saracoğlu talks in Moscow in October 1939 validated Soviet presumptions. As the existing documentary evidences show us, the Soviet Government raised the issue of Romania as it attempted to obtain assurances of Turkish neutrality not only in the event of the Soviet seizure of Bessarabia, but also in the event of a Bulgarian attempt to acquire Dobrudja.⁵² On that occasion, the Turkish Minister confirmed that Türkiye would not oppose Soviet action in respect of Bessarabia as Türkiye assumed its obligations under the Balkan Entente to refer only to the frontiers between the Balkan States but that should Bulgaria attempt to seize the Dobruja, Turkey would come to Romania's assistance. He informed Molotov, however, that Turkey would not commit itself in advance as to its course of action with respect to the Dardanelles in the former contingency.⁵³ Moreover, on October 17, 1939, the US Ambassador in Moscow informed the US State Secretary, Cordell Hull, that, according to the Turkish Foreign Minister, Great Britain notified that there would be no objection to Turkish neutrality in the event of Soviet aggression against Romania provided the present status of the Dardanelles remained unchanged.

⁵¹ AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara. 1935-1939, Vol. 1, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, September 19, 1939, Ankara, ff. 416-418.

⁵² AMAE, Fond 71, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara 1940-1941, Vol.2, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, December 25-26, 1939, Ankara, ff. 1-7.

⁵³ FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1939, General, Vol. I, *The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State*, Moscow, October 17, 1939, f. 486, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1939v01/pg_486.

The Romanian ambassador in Ankara reported on September 28 that there was a possibility that Moscow could propose to Minister Saracoğlu during his visit in the USSR to limit its obligations towards France and England only to the Mediterranean and to remain neutral towards the Balkan Peninsula. This meant prohibiting the passage of fleets through the straits that would have altered the balance of forces in the Black Sea. The Romanian ambassador expressed the opinion that the Turkish side could not accept such proposals and that Saracoğlu's visit would fail, resulting in a cooling of Turkish-Soviet relations.⁵⁴

These developments, which followed the German-Soviet invasion of Poland, created an extremely difficult situation for Romania, which found itself alone facing the USSR, Germany being now the only power able to counter the Soviet threat. The Turkish-Soviet negotiations in Moscow failed to produce a defense pact, but both nations remained equally eager to maintaining good relations based on the existing non-aggression bilateral treaty, which determined the overall political configuration of the relations between the two countries during the war.

At the end of 1939, there were two key issues shaping Romania's approach toward Ankara: what would Turkey's attitude be in the case of a Russian attack on Romania? And what support will Turkey provide to France and the United Kingdom if the guarantees offered to Romania are activated? The Romanian ambassador in Ankara received the answers during the meetings with Minister Saracoğlu on December 18 and 20, 1939. In essence, Turkey confirms that if aggression against Romania falls within the provisions of the Balkan Pact, Turkey will fulfill its alliance obligations. Otherwise, Turkey will decide according to the situation, but regarding the straits, it will comply with the Montreux Convention both in the case of neutrality and in the case of its belligerence.⁵⁵

The Romanian side attempted to examine the idea of a formal Turkish-Romanian agreement that would allow for a shared stance in the face of potential Russian aggression, but Ankara remained reluctant to commit. The Turkish-Russian Treaty of 1925 called for consultations

⁵⁴ MAE, Fond 21, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, September 28, 1939, Ankara, ff. 426-427.

⁵⁵ AMAE, Fond 21, 1920-1944, Turcia, Telegramme Ankara, 1935-1939, Vol. I, *Telegram of the Ambassador in Ankara, Vasile Stoica, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu*, December 26, 1939, Ankara, ff. 164-166

between the two sides in case one side intended to make a deal with one of the other's neighbors. Moscow tried to amend this clause, but Turkey opposed it. This agreement imposed a number of restrictions on the possibility of a Turkish-Romanian pact. However, Ankara shared the assumption that in the event of hostile intentions toward Romania, the USSR would consult with Türkiye, particularly with its position over the transit via the straits.⁵⁶ In other words, Turkey may be able to moderate possible Soviet hostile intentions. It became clear for Bucharest that Türkiye, although its support and loyalty were not in doubt, would refrain from assuming concrete commitments such as signing a pact of mutual assistance. Ankara's posture was influenced by its desire to avoid any move that the Soviets may perceive as provocative, as well as by a sense of security over its borders as a result of the commitments made by France and Great Britain.

Conclusions

Romania and Türkiye developed a close cooperation during 1939 based on their jointly assumed agenda of preserving peace and stability in their common neighborhood covering the Black Sea and Balkan areas. Türkiye's role in the Balkan Pact, its commitment to keep open the Straits and its willingness to help Romania to manage the complex threats around its borders turned it into a critically important ally for Bucharest. However, the long-standing problem that created resentment in the bilateral relationship resulted from the lack of a convergence of views on the Soviet Union. At the beginning of 1939, Romania found itself in a highly complicated situation. On the one hand, Germany's geopolitical advance coupled with a policy of appeasement assumed by the Western powers raised the specter of the German threat, pressing the Romanian government to adopt a policy of concessions to Berlin. On the other hand, the activation of Hungarian-Soviet-Bulgarian revisionist claims limited the freedom of maneuver of Bucharest, which was forced to maintain a particularly complex balance between the Western allies and Germany. Türkiye's concern, on the other side, was to find a line of accommodation between the Western powers and the USSR as a solution for securing the Straits, countering the German threat, and preserving its neutrality in a future European confrontation. In fact, Türkiye's foreign policy in 1939 was largely about the search for an alliance to connect Western powers, the

⁵⁶ Ibidem, ff. 167-168.

Balkans and the Soviet Union. Romania's policy was to find support against a possible Soviet threat and avoid being aligned with an anti-German alliance.

The perception of the threat has led to different visions of security. Turkey's strategy was to create a defense belt with Russia's involvement to deter Germany, while Romania wanted to draw Turkey into a security scheme that would deter Russia. For one, Russia was a traditional ally, for the other it was an existential threat. No doubt, Ankara understood Romania's critical security situation and strategic dilemmas. Increasing Soviet pressure was pushing Romania further into Germany's arms. Orbiting to Germany rendered the Balkan Alliance inoperable, nullifying Turkey's defence commitments to Romania on its southern border.

The major gap in threat perceptions and security visions have largely determined the nature, character, and outcomes of their common efforts during 1939. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact has dramatically shaped the geopolitical options and directions of actions of the two countries, the way in which they sought to counter their immediate threats and avoid being dragged into war. The threats equation has influenced the typology of action of the two actors. After 23 August 1939, the Soviet Union became virtually the main threat to Romania's national security. Turkey's interest in keeping its good relations with the USSR and Bucharest's need for support against the Soviet Union became impossible to accommodate. This is where the great challenge of the Romanian-Turkish relationship comes in: could Turkey moderate Moscow's aggressive ambitions towards Romania? But perhaps more importantly, did Turkey set out to do so?

There are debates regarding the double role that Ankara may have played between Bucharest and Moscow. Despite various assumptions, the reality was obvious: neither Türkiye nor the Western powers focused to deter the Soviet aggression against Romania as their fundamental interest and immediate priorities lay elsewhere. After the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, Romania's fate was already set. Left alone and isolated, Romania fell totally into the German camp seen as the only option against the Soviet Union, while Türkiye could maintain its position of neutrality and guardian of the Straits, which secured its position throughout the war.

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KEEPING TÜRKİYE NEUTRAL: KENAN KOCATURK'S MILITARY ATTACHÉ DUTY IN BUCHAREST DURING SECOND WORLD WAR*

Hamza BİLGÜ**

Abstract

Despite the intensive efforts of the Axis and Allies diplomacy and propaganda machines to take Türkiye their own side, decision-makers of Türkiye could maintain her non-war position throughout the Second World War. In order to keep Türkiye in a non-war position, decision-makers needed accurate and healthy intelligence flow from the battlefields. In contrast to the countries at war, Türkiye's non-war position allowed her to employ military attachés in countries where the war was ongoing. These military attachés received simultaneous intelligence from the fronts - especially European fronts- and fed decision-makers with this intelligence. In wartime conditions, the value of intelligence from military attachés could reach strategic level. Kenan Kocatürk, who served as military attaché in Bucharest during Second World War, followed German troops' movements in the Balkans and watched the course of battles of the Axis-Russo conflict closely. The intelligence obtained by Kocatürk, was utilised by Turkish decision-makers and helped keep Türkiye in non-war position.

Key Words: Military Attaché, Military Intelligence, Romania, Türkiye, World War II.

Introduction

The activities of military attachés in times of war and peace are a neglected subject in the military history of Turkish Republic. The main reason for this is the inaccessibility of the military archives of the Turkish Republican period. On the other hand, military attachés, their reports and activities are of great importance in military history researches.¹ Although

* This study is derived from my PhD dissertation entitled "Turkish Armed Forces in British Military Attaché Reports (1949-1960)", which is being prepared under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ali Satan at Marmara University Institute of Turkish Studies.

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the importance of military intelligence has been appreciated since ancient times, the establishment of military attaché offices institutionalised and formalised the process of foreign military intelligence. As the effectiveness of planning based on military intelligence became evident, official military attaché offices operating within embassies became widespread. Military attachés, who took diplomatic missions under the names of Military Attaché, Naval Attaché and -with the emergence of air power on the stage of history and warfare in the 20th century- Air Attaché, had the opportunity to establish legitimate and direct relations with the command echelon of the countries in which they served. In the 19th century, the number of military attachés employed especially by European states increased day by day.² Military attachés as well as many war observers closely followed the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.³

Military attachés played a role in shaping alliances before the First World War.⁴ Throughout the war, neutral countries employed military attachés in the countries where the war was going on, and belligerent countries employed military attachés in allied and neutral countries.⁵ While the number of military attachés around the world decreased in the 1920s within the scope of demilitarisation, the duties of military attachés increased with the start of the arms race in the 1930s. Before the Second World War, military attachés again played a role in shaping alliances.⁶ During the war, the intelligence gathered by military attachés was of vital

¹ For example, Alesandru Dutu, Lenuta Nicolescu and Alexandru Oşca has arranged a 3-volume study of the reports of Romanian military attaches during the Second World War. See: Alesandru Dutu, Lenuta Nicolescu and Alexandru Oşca, *Ataşatii Militari Transmit...(1938-1944)*, Vol. 1-3, (Bucureşti: Europa Nova, 2001).

² Gültekin Yıldız, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Askeri İstihbarat (1864-1914)*, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2019), p. 29-42.

³ See: Sir Ian Hamilton, *A British Attaché in the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. I-II, (Toronto: Legacy Book Press, 2021).

⁴ Tim Hadley, *Military Diplomacy in Dual Alliance, German Military Attaché Reporting from Vienna, 1879-1914*, (London: Lexington Books, 2016), p. 10-26.

⁵ For Alfred Knox's memoirs of his service as Attaché to Moscow during the First World War, see: Major General Sir Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army 1914-1917*, Vol. I-II, (London: Hutchinson&Co., 1921); For the activities of Ottoman Attaché Ömer Fevzi Bey in Iran during the First World War, see: Çağdaş Yüksel, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Ataşemiliter Ömer Fevzi Bey'in İran'daki Faaliyetleri", *Ulakbilge Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 6, No. 30 (2018), p. 1549-1556.

⁶ Alfred Vagts, *The Military Attaché*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 49-76.

importance, especially for countries, which were weak in terms of human and signal intelligence.

Throughout the Second World War, Türkiye managed to maintain its non-war position despite intense pressure from the Axis and Allies. Maintaining this non-war position has been possible through an effective and nuanced foreign policy. Such a foreign policy required accurate and reliable intelligence. Turkish decision-makers tried to determine who would win the war and where Türkiye would be positioned in the post-war balance, while maintaining the country's non-war position. A Turkish scholar, titled his book on Türkiye's foreign policy in the Second World War "The Game of Balance".⁷ This game of balance requires maintaining friendly relations with both sides of the war, while at the same time maintaining a position outside the war. In the context of balance policy, Türkiye first signed a treaty of friendship with Britain and France in October 1939.⁸

France's early defeat, on the one hand, undermined the security umbrella established by this treaty and, on the other, gave Türkiye a valid excuse not to enter the war. After Germany invaded the Balkans and reached the Turkish border, Germany launched Operation Barbarossa to reach the Caucasus through Russia instead of Türkiye, which facilitated Türkiye's efforts to stay out of the war.⁹ British reports say that the German declaration of war against the Soviets turned Türkiye into a place of celebration.¹⁰ Meanwhile, before the Operation Barbarossa, Türkiye signed a non-aggression pact with Bulgaria, Soviet Russia and Germany respectively.¹¹ In the period leading up to the Battle of Stalingrad, Germany pressured Türkiye to join the war in order to expand the front on which the Soviets were fighting.¹² However, Türkiye managed to resist the pressure and maintain its non-war position. After the Battle of Stalingrad,

⁷ Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2014).

⁸ İsmail Soysal, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları (1920-1945)*, Vol. 1, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000), p. 591-609.

⁹ Baskın Oran, "Dönemin Bilançosu", *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, vol 1: 1919-1980, ed. Baskın Oran, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2009), p. 387-397.

¹⁰ Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu*, p. 150.

¹¹ İsmail Soysal, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları (1920-1945)*, p. 631-639.

¹² Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi (1938-1945)*, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 1996), p. 599-694.

when the Soviets took the initiative in the war, the pressure on Türkiye to enter the war increased, but Türkiye refused to enter the war, claiming that its army was not ready for it and taking advantage of the contradictions between the Allies.¹³ Meanwhile, both Axis and Allied intelligence and propaganda machines made great efforts to draw Türkiye into the war on their side. The British military attaché, Colonel Arnold, even revealed German sabotage plans to the Turkish intelligence agency in order to weaken Türkiye's cooperation with Germany and bring it to the side of the Allies.¹⁴ By the time Türkiye declared war against Japan and Germany, the war was almost over.¹⁵ In managing this entire process, military attachés fed Turkish decision-makers with the intelligence they had acquired.

Hardly, Romania did not have the geopolitical advantage that Türkiye had. With the outbreak of the war, both German and Soviet expansionist policies turned Romanian territory into a battlefield. Before the Second World War, Britain and France had signed an agreement with Romania and guaranteed Romania's territorial integrity. Romanian military attachés also took part in the signature of these treaties.¹⁶ After the invasion of France by German troops and the collapse of the France government, Romania's guarantee of territorial integrity was abrogated. Hungary, Bulgaria and Russia made territorial claims against Romania after the guarantor status was abolished. Under these circumstances, Romania had lost Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina territories to Russia, Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses had led to regime change. Marshall Ion Antonescu came to power in Romania and made an alliance with the Axis Powers.¹⁷

After the formation of this alliance, German troops used the Romanian lands and Romania became the base of Operation Barbarossa against Russia. Meanwhile, Germans trained and reorganized Romanian

¹³ Mustafa Aydın, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türkiye, 1939-1945", *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Vol. 1: 1919-1980, ed. Baskın Oran, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2009), p. 434-468.

¹⁴ Polat Safi, *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı 1826-2023*, (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2023), p. 183.

¹⁵ 23 February 1945. Hüner Tuncer, *İsmet İnönü'nün Dış Politikası (1938-1950): İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye*, (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2012), p. 159.

¹⁶ Marusia Cîrstea, "Romanian Military Attachés in London and Their Diplomatic Value (1919-1939)", *Journal of Arts&Humanities*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (2014), p. 1-8.

¹⁷ Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 202-204.

troops and involved them to the invasion of Russia. The new Romanian army reorganized by the Germans was smaller than before but it was mobilized and had high firepower.¹⁸ Therefore, Romania became the third largest army of the Axis powers.¹⁹ Romanian forces played a significant role in the German-led invasion of the Soviet Union. Romanian troops operated alongside the German army, mainly fighting in the southern region of the Eastern Front. However, in the Battle of Stalingrad, the main Romanian were troops destroyed by the Soviets. In 1944, the Soviet Red Army launched a successful counteroffensive, leading to the take of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romanian control. From 1943 onwards, Romania wanted to leave the war and sign a separate peace treaty with the Allies. As the Soviet forces advanced into Romanian territory, King Michael I staged a coup against Antonescu's regime in August 1944. Romania switched sides and joined the Allies. Romanian troops fought alongside Soviet forces against the remaining German forces in Romania. World War II ended in 1945, and Romania emerged as a communist state under Soviet influence.²⁰

In the following chapters, Kenan Kocatürk's military attaché duty in Bucharest during the Second World War will be discussed in the context of the situation of formal foreign military intelligence of neutral countries in the Second World War, Turkish foreign policy prioritising active neutrality and Romania's war experience.

1. Kenan Kocatürk's Assignment to Military Attaché Duty

Kenan Kocatürk was born in Beykoz (Istanbul) in 29 October 1909. He entered Kuleli Military High School in 1923 and graduated from Kuleli after five years of education in 1928. After graduation, he entered *Harp Okulu* (War School) immediately. He had separated artillery class at *Harp Okulu* and graduated as an artillery class officer in April 1930. Thereafter he entered the Artillery School (*Topçu Fen Tatbik Okulu*) and Artillery Fire School for his branch education. His first assignment was

¹⁸ All these developments were closely monitored by Turkish foreign military intelligence. Dışişleri Bakanlığı Türk Diplomatik Arşivi (Turkish Diplomatic Archives) (=DBTDA), Germany (=501), 87959-320583-126; DBTDA, Britain (=534), 37165-148354-9; DBTDA, 501, 31560-124815-82.

¹⁹ Mark Axworthy and Horia Serbanescu, *The Romanian Army of World War 2*, (London: Osprey Publishing, 1991), p. 3.

²⁰ Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, p. 211-221.

made to 7th Artillery Regiment as a Lieutenant in Adana where is in southern Türkiye. In 1932, he received anti-aircraft artillery education at the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Course. In 18 March 1933, his regiment moved to Izmir, where is around Aegean Sea Coast of Western Türkiye. Kocatürk passed the exam of Turkish War College (*Harp Akademisi*) in 1934 and entered this school in 1935 to receive staff officer education. Kocatürk raised to First Lieutenant Rank in 1935 and married his wife Suzan in 1936. After graduation from War College, he was appointed to the 26th Artillery Regiment at Manisa where is located near Izmir. In 1939, he was promoted to Captain rank.²¹ He was appointed to an infantry division at Izmit in 1939 and passed the military attaché exam in 1940. In April 1940, he was appointed to Bucharest as military attaché. He arrived in Bucharest and started his job on 25 June 1940. Kenan Kocatürk also took naval and air attaché duties.²²

Military attachés have two main duties in the countries where they are served. Military attachés are first and foremost diplomatic representatives of their countries. In this context, attachés carry out diplomatic activities and represent their countries and armies in the countries where they are assigned. Secondly, military attachés are responsible for gathering military intelligence legitimately on the armies of the countries in which they are assigned. Military attachés of powerful countries in terms of military production and influence may also undertake tasks such as establishing military influence and marketing military equipment. In the forthcoming sections, the military intelligence and military diplomacy activities of Kenan Kocatürk will be examined.

1.1. Kenan Kocatürk's Military Intelligence Activities

During the Second World War, due to her geographical location and her position in the war intelligence from Romania was of great importance for Türkiye. In wartime environment, Türkiye's primary source of intelligence has been military attachés, with little capability for human intelligence through field agents or signal intelligence through technological means. It can be said that Kenan Kocatürk was fed by five different intelligence sources in Bucharest. The first of these is open

²¹ Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Republican Archives) (=BCA), 30-11-1-0 / 134-36-11, (*Bakanlıklar Arası Tayin Daire Başkanlığı*).

²² Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları (1909-1999)*, (İstanbul: Kastaş Yayınevi, 1999), p. 11-247.

intelligence. Even in the 19th century, open intelligence, which was an important source of intelligence²³, became one of the primary sources of intelligence in the Second World War. The battles of the Second World War, which took place at a time when communication technologies were highly developed, contained very rich sources in terms of open intelligence. War reporting, which institutionalised during the Crimean War²⁴, experienced its golden age during the Second World War. Daily newspapers, radios and official statements reported simultaneous news from fronts around the world. Kocatürk was fed from all these sources and reported the information he obtained to the centre.

Ceremonies and special invitations are a field of information for military attachés. Kocatürk's second source of intelligence was the events where he met with diplomats from Romania and other countries. Attachés may even have the opportunity to contact the highest-level bureaucrats in such organisations. Prior to the First World War, British military attachés frequently contacted with the German Kaiser at ceremonies, and the German authorities had to take precautions against “*the Kaiser's tendency to talk to the attachés*”.²⁵

In 1929, A. Lutfullah, who wrote a book titled “*Sefaret Kâtipleri ve Ataşemiliterler (Embassy Clerks and Military Attachés)*” for diplomats to work in embassies, states that embassy diplomats should definitely attend tea invitations and cocktails because of the opportunity of contact and communication with important people.²⁶ Kenan Kocatürk met with diplomats from foreign countries, especially Romania, both at the ceremonies he attended and at the cocktails; he hosted at his home, and thus gained valuable intelligence. On one occasion, the German Air Attaché, General Gerstenberg, hosted a dinner at his home for the military

²³ Napoleon had British newspapers followed in the early period. Christopher Andrew, *Gizli Dünya: Dünya İstihbarat Tarihi*, trans. Mehmet Fatih Baş, (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2022), p. 365; During the Crimean War, the Russian Tsar said that he did not need spies when he had The Times of London newspaper. Douglas L. Wheeler, “A Guide to the History of Intelligence 1800-1918”, *The Intelligencer, Journal of US Intelligence Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2012), p. 48.

²⁴ Doğu Aydın, *Avrupalı Savaş Muhabirlerinin Eserlerinde Kırım Savaşı*, Master Thesis, (Ankara: Hacettepe University, 2012), p. 10-17.

²⁵ Matthew S. Seligmann, *Spies in Uniform: British Military & Naval Intelligence on the Eve of the First World War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 45.

²⁶ A. Lutfullah, *Sefâret Kâtipleri ve Ataşemiliterler*, Vol. II, (İstanbul: İlhami Matbaası, 1929), p. 47.

attachés serving in Romania. At this dinner, Kocatürk had the opportunity to exchange information and ideas with the military attachés of Bulgaria and Hungary. During this period, the high allowances of the Turkish military attachés enabled him to rent good houses and organise representative cocktails.²⁷ However, weekly propaganda films were shown at the German Embassy in Romania, some of which Kocatürk attended.²⁸

Human intelligence is another intelligence gathering method of Kocatürk. In those years, a large number of Gagauz Turks lived in Romania. Turkish Ambassador Tanrıöver²⁹ established good relations with the Gagauz Turks in Romania and mediated the asylum of many Gagauz Turks to Türkiye.³⁰ In addition, there are also non-Muslim elements who asyllumised from Türkiye to Romania after the deportation and exchange and who can speak Turkish.³¹ For Kocatürk, these people were both a source of military intelligence and a means of being informed about Romanian public opinion. Turkish minorities living in the interior of Russia are also included in this intelligence field.

Kocatürk had two other sources of intelligence in Romania. The first of these is other military attachés, and the second is visits to units and fronts. Kocatürk relied on these two sources of intelligence more than other sources. In the following paragraphs, the ways in which Kocatürk utilised

²⁷ At this point, Kocatürk's being married gave him a great advantage. This is because the help of his wife facilitates the hospitality of diplomats at home. In fact, British Naval Attaché Poe writes that military attachés who would serve in Türkiye must be married. Because married military attachés, with the help of their spouses, would be able to host invitations at their homes, make friends with important diplomats and access valuable information. TNA FO, 371-101883, Annual Report on the Turkish Navy for 1951.

²⁸ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 291.

²⁹ His full name is Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver. He was born in 1886. Carried out intellectual struggle and propaganda activities behind the front line during the Turkish National Struggle. Tanrıöver, who played an important role in the construction of Kemalist ideology, served as Ambassador to Romania from 1931 to 1944. Melih Duman, "Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver'in Raporları Doğrultusunda Romanya'daki Siyasi Gelişmeler ve Türkiye-Romanya İlişkileri (1931-1944)", *Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (December 2021), p. 432-433.

³⁰ Adil Dağistan, "Hamdullah Suphi'nin Romanya Büyükelçiliği ve Gagauz Türkleri", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, vol. 38, no. 54 (November 2002), p. 815-828.

³¹ One of them was Madame Aznavurian, a former Ottoman Armenian. Kocatürk says, "Through her and her daughter, we had our finger on the pulse of social, political and economic public opinion in Romania". Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 265-266.

these intelligence sources will be explained through a case study. Kenan Kocatürk had the chance to visit the fronts where Operation Barbarossa was taking place twice. The first of these visits was made possible thanks to intelligence obtained from German Assistant Military Attaché, and the second visit was carried out with a group of military attachés. After the German invasion in the Balkans, Kocatürk's first task was to find out where the German troops would target next. There were two options: Türkiye or Russia. Turkish decision-makers were anxious about that the Germans would target Türkiye next.³²

Clear information from Romania would ease the hands of decision-makers. Kocatürk could obtain very clear intelligence from German Assistant Military Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Max Braun who was his scholar from Turkish War College. Max Braun was one of Kocatürk's primary sources of intelligence during his military attaché duty³³. Braun showed him the German plans for invasion of Russia, and relieved him that Germany was not planning an attack on Türkiye.³⁴ This information, obtained from primary sources, provided Turkish decision-makers with a great deal of comfort in terms of policy-making. The first anniversary of Kocatürk's duty, Operation Barbarossa had started and he could closely monitored the activities on the front line.³⁵

After the commence of Operation Barbarossa, the German propaganda machine accelerated its efforts to attract Türkiye to the side of the Axis Powers. Two retired Turkish generals, who were writing articles in daily newspapers on the course of the war, Ali İhsan Sabis³⁶ and Hüseyin

³² A Turkish officer, Zeki İlder, acted as a courier, visiting the Balkan countries and investigating whether Germany intended to attack Türkiye. İlder was later posted to Berlin as military attaché. Zeki İlder, *Bir Ömür Boyu Askerlik 1919-1972*, Kastaş Yayınevi, (İstanbul: Kastaş Yayınevi, 2003), p. 26-44.

³³ However, it is understood from Max Braun's testimonies he gave during his captivity in Soviet Russia after the Second World War that both during his War College years in Turkey and during his years in Romania, he carried out intelligence activities about Turkey for the German army. See: Hazal Yalın, "Max Braun: Türkiye'yi Yakından Tanıyan Bir Nazi Görevlisinin İfadeleri", <https://hazalyalin.medium.com/max-braun-t%C3%BCrkiyeyi-yak%C4%B1ndan-tan%C4%B1yan-bir-nazi-g%C3%B6revlisinin-ifadeleri-f004273d24ce>, (accessed 10.07.2023).

³⁴ DBTDA, 501, 31560-124815-136.

³⁵ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 273-276.

³⁶ He was born in Istanbul in 1882. Sabis was an artillery class Ottoman staff officer. He was a classmate with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk from Ottoman War College. Commanded

Hüsnü Emir Erkilet³⁷ were invited by Germans to visit the fronts in Russia. Kocatürk obtained information on the subject from Max Braun. He corresponded with the Turkish General Staff and was involved in the matter. It is understood that the Turkish General Staff had no knowledge of the matter and that the visa requests of these generals were based on false grounds. After correspondence with German authorities, Ali İhsan Sabis' visa application was rejected by Turkish authorities and it was envisaged that General Ali Fuad Erden³⁸ would attend the visit to the front instead of Sabis. Romania's military attaché in Türkiye was also part of the delegation. This is how Kocatürk made his first visit to the front (October 1941). On the first day of the 16-day visit, the German Military Attaché in Romania hosted a dinner in honour of the guests. On October 18, 1941, Axis-occupied Odessa was visited. In this trip, they visited General von Rundstedt's³⁹ headquarter, who was the commander of South Army Groups of Axis Powers. His headquarter was deployed on the banks of Dnieper River. After that, they visited headquarter of 11. Army of Axis Powers. Its commander was General von Manstein. They had visited Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch headquarter also. The visit was not limited to the frontlines. The delegation was also taken to Berlin. In Berlin,

Ottoman troops on the Iranian and Iraqi fronts during the World War I and achieved significant successes. After being held captive by the British in Malta, he came back to Türkiye in 1921 and joined Turkish National Struggle. He had disagreements with the chain of command during the Turkish War of Independence and retired in 1923. Zekeriya Türkmen, "Ali İhsan Sabis", *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi (=DİA)*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayinevi, 2008), Vol. 35, p. 346-348.

³⁷ He was born in Istanbul in 1883. Erkilet was an infantry class Ottoman staff officer. Joined Tripoli and Balkan Wars. In World War I, he commanded Ottoman troops at Gallipoli, Galician, Palestine and Syria fronts. Erkilet was one of the Turkish War of Independence veterans. After nine years of service in the Turkish Republican army, he retired in 1932. In addition to being a successful officer, Erkilet is an extremely important and prolific Turkish military historian. See: Irem Ozel Çavdar, Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir Erkilet'in Askerî ve Siyasî Faaliyetleri, Master Thesis, (Ankara: Turkish National Defence University, 2022).

³⁸ He was born in Istanbul in 1883. He was an artillery officer. After his participation in the Balkan War, he served as military attaché in Paris. During the First World War, he fought on the Canal, Hejaz and Syrian fronts. He was one of the leading commanders of the Turkish War of Independence. He was one of the most elite generals of the Turkish army in the interwar period and in the World War II. Hazal Düzen, Orgeneral Ali Fuad Erden'in Hayatı ve Faaliyetleri (1883-1957), Master Thesis, (İstanbul: Marmara University, 2022).

³⁹ He was served for Ottoman Army in Gallipoli front during World War I.

the delegation visited the German Armoured Troops School, the Land War College and the Volkswagen factory.⁴⁰

Erkilet turned his memories of his visit to the front into a book in 1943 and titled it “What I Saw in Eastern Front”.⁴¹ The second Eastern Front visit of Kocatürk had occurred with the military attachés of the allied and neutral countries serving in Romania (3 July 1942). These visits enabled Kocatürk to gather information about the developments at the front, while also enabling him to gain ideas and experiences about modern warfare. Since Türkiye did not enter the Second World War, the experience of officers stationed abroad during the war played an important role in the reorganisation of the Turkish army after the war. In particular, Turkish military attachés who serving in Europe became aware of the backwardness of the Turkish army by observing modern firepower and manoeuvres.⁴²

In 1943, things were no longer going well for the Axis powers and Romania in the war. Romania began to feel the war closely, and the military attachés took their share. After the Russian troops seized the initiative against the Germans at the Battle of Stalingrad, Kocatürk watched closely the withdrawal of Axis troops from inside of Russia. Realising that the war was being lost by the Axis powers, Kocatürk informed the Turkish General Staff about new conditions. Thanks to intelligence, which was collected by Kocatürk, Turkish decision-makers to make rapid political manoeuvres for keeping Türkiye non-war position. Kocatürk leaved from Bucharest at 4 March 1944.⁴³

1.2. Kenan Kocatürk’s Military Diplomacy Activities

Kocatürk carried out two different diplomatic activities during his visit to Odessa, hosted by the Romanian authorities, together with other military attachés serving in Romania. The first of these was the bringing to Türkiye of Abdullah Palavan, Director of the Odessa Institute of

⁴⁰ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 293-317.

⁴¹ H. Emir Erkilet, *Şark Cephesi’nde Gördüklerim*, (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1943).

⁴² For example, he followed closely the airborne operation of German troops against Crete Island in 1941. He admitted to his teacher and colleague Max Braun that the lessons on parachute airborne troops at the War College had seemed like a fantasy to him. However, after this airborne operation he was confessed that his ignorance of modern warfare. Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 186.

⁴³ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 330-342.

Bacteriology, and his son Selim Palavan, who was a machine engineer and chess master. Ambassador Tanrıöver also endeavoured to bring the Palavan family to Türkiye, and eventually the father and son defected to Türkiye.⁴⁴ The father Palavan brought important bacteriological instruments with him from Odessa during his asylum in Türkiye, and the son Palavan became one of the leading chess players in Türkiye.⁴⁵ Kocatürk was also interested in the rehabilitation of the Turkish martyrdom in Odessa. In this martyrdom, the officers and soldiers who were martyred on the cruiser Mecidiye, which sank during the operation south of Odessa in 1915⁴⁶, were buried. Thanks to Kocatürk's efforts, the location of the martyrdom was precisely determined, its surroundings were cleaned, the surrounding walls were repaired, and sketches and photographs were taken. Kocatürk prepared a report on the subject and informed the Turkish Ministry of National Defence.⁴⁷

Kocatürk was also involved in the restoration of Turkish martyrs' cemeteries in Romania after the Odessa Turkish Martyrdom. There were small Turkish Martyrs' Cemeteries in the Romanian cities of Ibrail and Galas, and a large one in Bucharest. In these martyrdoms lie the soldiers and officers who were martyred on the Galician Front during the First World War.⁴⁸ The guards of these martyrs' cemeteries were Turkish and their salaries were paid by the military attaché office appropriation. Kocatürk improved the salaries of the guards and used the fund he created for the restoration of martyrs' cemeteries. Kocatürk offered to open a project competition at the Faculty of Fine Arts for the revival of the martyrdoms and to give a free Romania trip to the winner of the project. He left from her post without getting any results from her correspondence with the Academy of Fine Arts and the Ministry of National Defence.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 313-317.

⁴⁵ Selim Palavan has written important chess and engineering books in Türkiye. See: Selim Palavan, *Satranç Kitabım*, (İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınevi, 2002); Selim Palavan, *Pistonlu Makinalar Dinamiği*, (İstanbul: İÜ Makine Fakültesi Ofset Atölyesi, 1975).

⁴⁶ Ferdi Uyaniker, *Türk Donanmasında Mecidiye Kruvazörü*, Master Thesis, (İstanbul: Marmara University, 2009), p. 262-266.

⁴⁷ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 314-315.

⁴⁸ For the battles of Turkish troops on the Galician Front in the First World War, see: Cihat Akçakayaloğlu, *Birinci Dünya Harbi Avrupa Cephesleri (Galiçya Cephesi), VII. Cilt Birinci Kısım*, (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1967).

⁴⁹ Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 319-322.

The loss of the Battle of Stalingrad by the Axis powers was a turning point for Romania's Second World War policy. In this battle, some of Romania's troops participating in Operation Barbarossa were also destroyed and Romania's fighting power was broken. After the Battle of Stalingrad, as Russia seized the initiative on the Eastern Front and advanced towards the West. Romania's threat perception increased and Romania sought to sign a separate peace agreement with the Allies. During this period, the Romanians demanded that Türkiye, which maintained its non-war position and with which they were allied within the framework of the Balkan Pact, play an intermediary role in their negotiations with the Allies. On the one hand, the Turkish-British-Romanian secret services held contacts in Istanbul, and on the other hand, officials held peace negotiations.⁵⁰ During this process, Romanian Foreign Minister Mihai Antonescu and Turkish Ambassador Tanrıöver worked in close co-operation. Negotiations on Türkiye's mediation for an independent peace treaty between Romania and the Allies were held mainly in Switzerland and Türkiye.⁵¹

Kenan Kocatürk played an active role in this diplomatic traffic as much as the Romanian military attaché in Türkiye. Perhaps the most important of these activities was the sending of information about the meetings between the Romanian authorities and Tanrıöver in Switzerland to Türkiye by diplomatic courier instead of telegraphic communication for security purposes. Kocatürk was entrusted with the courier task, and he travelled to Türkiye by train with his diplomatic passport and courier bag containing top-secret information. Kocatürk was attacked at the Sofia railway station and his diplomatic courier bag was stolen by a thief. Kocatürk chased the thief and fired several shots behind him. The panicked thief threw the bag and ran away.⁵² Although the Bulgarian police investigating the incident stated that it was a case of a common theft, it is possible that the attempted theft was planned by the Germans, given that the Germans were planning to arrest Prince Stirbey, who was negotiating peace between the Allies and Romania, on the train at the Bulgarian

⁵⁰ Liliana Elena Boşcan, "Activity of the Special Operation Executive in Romania via Turkey, 1943 – 1944", *Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 2021), p. 11-23.

⁵¹ Ömer Metin ve Liliana Boscan Altın, "Turkey's Role on Romanian Diplomatic Struggle (1st of February 1943-23rd of August 1944)", *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, Vol. 6, No. 15 (September 2013), p. 355-384.

⁵² Kenan Kocatürk, *Bir Subayın Anıları 1909-1999*, p. 325-332.

border.⁵³ Kenan Kocatürk returned to Türkiye on 4 March 1944 without seeing Romania join the Allies in August 1944.

Conclusion

The intelligence gathered by military attachés during the Second World War was of great importance for Türkiye, which was weak in terms of human and signal intelligence. One of these military attachés was Kenan Kocatürk. Kocatürk carried out military intelligence and military diplomacy activities during his military attaché duty in Bucharest. During his duty in Bucharest, Kocatürk obtained valuable intelligence, especially from German sources. The information he received from Max Braun, the German Assistant Military Attaché, could reach a strategic level for Türkiye. Kocatürk's utilisation of German sources so well is based on two reasons. The first reason was Kocatürk's good knowledge of the German language. The second is that most of the Germans Kocatürk came into contact with both in Bucharest and during his visits to the front line had previously served in Türkiye. Some of the German generals who fought against Russia on the Eastern Front were comrades-in-arms with the Turks in the First World War. Therefore, the German influence on the Turkish Armed Forces in the late Ottoman and Republican periods facilitated Türkiye's acquisition of intelligence from Germany during the Second World War. The Germans, on the other hand, turned retired Turkish generals, who had been comrades-in-arms during the First World War, into part of their propaganda machine and used them to influence Turkish public opinion.

Kocatürk used diplomatic channels in two different contexts. These assets are mostly martyrs' cemeteries where Turkish soldiers who were martyred in the First World War are buried. Kocatürk's second diplomatic mission took place when Türkiye acted as a mediator between Romania and the Allies. Kocatürk, together with Ambassador Tanrıöver, made contact with the Romanian authorities and acted as a very dangerous diplomatic courier duty.

The military attaché post had two important outcomes for Kocatürk. Kocatürk, who closely followed the Second World War thanks to his duty, was able to observe modern warfare tactics and technologies

⁵³ Ömer Metin ve Liliانا Boscan Altın, "Turkey's Role on Romanian Diplomatic Struggle (1st of February 1943-23rd of August 1944)", p. 376.

and carried these experiences to Türkiye. Indeed, Türkiye's non-participation in the Second World War would leave most Turkish officers unable to understand the transformation in the character of modern warfare, and Turkish war doctrines from the First World War have become obsolete. A second opportunity for Kocatürk was that his financial means were considerably increased due to the high salaries in foreign missions. During this period, Turkish officers were facing financial problems due to the low incomes associated with the war economy. Kocatürk's return from Romania with two luxury cars was a matter of envy for Turkish officers. Some of his friends said to him, "You're not driving your car through the street, you're driving over our rib cage."

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