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## **Establishment of the Austrian Military Border in Transylvania and Its Short- and Medium-term Effects\*\***

Establishing the Austrian military border in Transylvania was not only a military, but also a political, economic and, up to a point, religious decision, taken by the Crown near the end of a long and costly war, under specific circumstances and events taking place in the province. It was also probably the main reason why Empress Maria Theresa was remembered by several generations of Transylvanians, and remains one of the most celebrated acts of her reign according to Romanian historical writing. This paper seeks to provide a synthetic overview of the topic, based on both the international (mainly German and Austrian) and the Romanian historical literature, given the highly limited accessibility of the latter in terms of language and range of dissemination. It opens with short introductory historiographical considerations, followed by a presentation of the prerequisites and reasons for the border regiments' creation, alongside the main steps in the establishment process. The second part provides a short analysis of the mutual benefits brought about by the military border for both the empire and the locals, as well as the difficulties and resistance encountered during the establishment, along with the short- and medium-term social implications.

*Keywords:* military border, Habsburg Empire, Transylvania, 18<sup>th</sup> century

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## A short note on the historical literature regarding the Transylvanian military border

Before engaging fully with the subject of this study, some brief and selective references to the general evolution of historical literature on the topic may prove useful, especially since a large part of it comprises papers of limited accessibility, written in the Romanian or Hungarian language. Given its length, this historiographic sketch does not seek to be an exhaustive account or pursue analytical depth. On the contrary, it assumes a selective and descriptive character, dedicated to informing the reader about the general evolution of historical literature relevant to the subject in question by focusing mainly on the Romanian and Hungarian titles, as their number has seen an upward trend in recent years.

Although it has constantly aroused historians' interest, the Austrian military border in Transylvania (as well as in the Banat) remains much less known and researched as compared to the Croatian-Slavonian border. Historiography on the military border in Transylvania has its roots in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and initially comprised statistical and historical-geographic works, followed in the second half of the century by syntheses and monographs concerning different regiments or border regions, which were strongly influenced by the nationalist and/or loyalist polemics of the dualist period.<sup>1</sup> To these, a consistent memoir-based literature was added, starting from the late 1700s. The interwar period and the new political and historiographical context led to the emergence of two characteristic features in the research on the subject in question: "nationalization" (in the sense of focusing almost exclusively on Romanian regiments)<sup>2</sup> and "localism" (in the sense of research and researchers being mainly concentrated in the area of the former border guard regiments and less in major university centres).<sup>3</sup> Interest in the topic returned in the 1960s and 1970s, in both Romanian

<sup>1</sup> Adrian Onofreiu, "Granița năsăudeană sau perenitatea unei mentalități. Perspectivă istoriografică", *Anuarul Asociației profesorilor de istorie din România - filiala Bistrița-Năsăud* 1 (2006): 219-220; Josef Wolf, "Granița militară din Transilvania și din Banat (1762/64-1851/73)", in: *Călător prin istorie. Omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani*, ed. Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2010), 83-86. As works from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on this topic are constantly cited in contemporary historical literature, there is no reason for detailing them here.

<sup>2</sup> Sabine Jesner also emphasizes this aspect. Cf. Sabine Jesner, "Habsburgische Grenzraumpolitik in der Siebenbürgischen Militärgrenze (1760-1830). Verteidigungs- und Präventionsstrategien" (PhD thesis: Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 2013), 21-22. It should be stated, however, that this form of "nationalization", which continues to this day, is equally specific to the Romanian and Hungarian literature on the topic (see the most recent titles in Hungarian historical writing in n. 9 below).

<sup>3</sup> It is relevant in the sense that most of the research focusing on Romanian Border Guard Regiment no. 17 (Năsăud), which is probably the best studied one, was undertaken by representatives of the local intelligentsia, many of whom were descendants of the border guards. Cf. Onofreiu, "Granița năsăudeană", 221-222. The situation is similar to that of Romanian Regiment no. 16 (Orlat) and for the border regiments in Banat, regardless of their ethnic profile.

and German historiography. During this period, the most important monograph contributions, authored by Mathias Bernath,<sup>4</sup> Carol Göllner,<sup>5</sup> and Virgil Şotropa,<sup>6</sup> were written in the form of synthesis works, which surpassed the narrow framework of one or another of the former military units. In parallel, a large number of small-scale studies was carried out and published, most of which followed the model established in the interwar period, while being subjected to inherent internal ideological influences and pressures. This period, from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, was characterized, as a recent historiographer has emphasized, by an *emotional and ideological perspective*.<sup>7</sup>

The 1990s saw a revival of interest in the subject, which took the form of a growing number of published papers, scholarly events, and PhD theses. However, the focus slowly shifted from pre- to post-1848, from the time of the border guard regiments to the developments following the disbandment of the military border, and from military history to social and cultural approaches. Moreover, the bulk of literature on the topic continues to be written in Romanian or Hungarian, which makes it less accessible to most foreign researchers.<sup>8</sup> While exceptions do

<sup>4</sup> Mathias Bernath, "Die Errichtung der siebenbürgischen Militärgrenze und die Wiener Rumänenpolitik in der frühjosephinischen Zeit", *Süd-ost Forschungen* 19 (1960): 164-192; Mathias Bernath, *Die Habsburgen und die Anfänge der Rumänischen Nationsbildung* (Leiden: Brill, 1972). Romanian ed.: *Habsburgii și începuturile formării națiunii române* (Cluj: Dacia, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Carol Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță din Transilvania (1764-1851)* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1973). German ed.: *Die siebenbürgische Militärgrenze* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Valeriu Şotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc năsăudean și locul său în lupta pentru progres social și libertate națională a românilor din Transilvania* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Bolovan, "Granița militară austriacă și românii din Transilvania în sec. XVI-II-XIX (studiu de caz: zona Năsăud)", in: *Pe urmele trecutului. Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani*, ed. by Ioan-Aurel Pop and Susana Andea (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2010), 437.

<sup>8</sup> Wolf, "Granița militară", 85-86, offers a short, but comprehensive, cross-national and cross-provincial perspective. The Romanian literature on the topic has been analysed for Regiment no. 17 (Năsăud) by Onofreiu, "Granița năsăudeană", 222-225; Bolovan, Bolovan, "Granița militară", 437; Adrian Onofreiu, "Granița năsăudeană sau perenitatea unei mentalități. Perspectivă istoriografică II (2006-2010)", *Arhiva Someșană* 9 (2010): 265-277. For Regiment no. 16 (Orlat), a sketchy historical and historiographical overview has been provided by Alexandru Bucur, *Școlile grănicerești de pe teritoriul fostului regiment de la Orlat (1871-1921)* (Brăila: Editura Sf. Ierarh Nicolae, 2014), 15-23. The Hungarian literature focuses almost exclusively on the Székely border guard regiments and does not benefit, to the best of our knowledge, from recent dedicated historiographical scholarship. Useful references can be found in the most recent titles dealing directly or tangentially with the topic: Elek Csetri, *Erdélyi ezredek a francia forradalom és a napóleoni idők háborúiban (1792-1815)* (Kolozsvar: Művelődés, 2005); István Nagy-Luttenberger, *A császári-királyi hadsereg 1765-1815. Szervezettörténet és létszámviszonyok* (Pápa: Gróf Esterházy Károly Múzeum, 2013), 87-111; Attila Réfi, *A császári-királyi huszárság törzstiszti kara a francia forradalmi és a napóleoni háborúk korában (1792-1815)* (Budapest; Sárvar: MTA Bölcsészettudományi kutatóközpont, Nadasdy Ferenc Múzeum, 2014), passim; Tamás Csikány, "Székely határőrezredek az austerlitz csatában", *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 2 (2016), 2: 351-380; Tamás Csikány, "A székely határőrség egységei a csatatereken a felvilágosult abszolutizmus korában", in: *Székelyföld története, II. kötet: 1562-1867*, ed. by Ákos Egyed, Hermann Guszt

exist,<sup>9</sup> together with fresh insights from abroad,<sup>10</sup> the military border in Transylvania, despite its placement in the larger framework of the Austrian military border, mainly remains a “Romanian/Hungarian national historiographic business,” with relatively few external enquirers.

## **Prerequisites for and motives behind the extension of Austrian military border to Transylvania and the Banat**

The reasons behind the creation of border regiments in Transylvania have been analysed by both foreign and Romanian historians. The above-mentioned works by Bernath, Göllner, and Şotropa, even though published in the 1960s and 1970s, are still used for reference to this day. Recently, Wolf has offered comparative insights on Transylvania and the Banat, while Bolovan and Bolovan have provided a synthetic analysis of the historical consequences of the military border’s establishment.<sup>11</sup> The authors agree that, although the main motivation for the

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táv Mihály and Teréz Oborni (Székelyudvarhely: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóintézet, Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület and Haáz Rezső Múzeum, 2016), 417-422; Tamás Csikány, “A székely határőrség egységei a csatatereken 1870 és 1848 között”, in: *Székelyföld története, II. kötet: 1562-1867*, ed. by Ákos Egyed, Hermann Gusztáv Mihály and Teréz Oborni (Székelyudvarhely: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóintézet, Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, Haáz Rezső Múzeum, 2016), 505-511; Tamás Csikány, “A székely határőrezredek, 1764-1851”, in: *Őrzők, vigyázatok a határra! Határvédelem, határőrizet, határ vadászok a középkortól napjainkig*, ed. by János Isaszegi, László Pósan, László Veszprémy and József Boda (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2017), 433-457. We are indebted to our colleague Csaba Horváth for his help with the latter titles.

<sup>9</sup> The early 1990s saw the first titles written by Romanian researchers in foreign languages following a gap of two decades: Andrei Sanda, “Der Status der rumänischen Gebiete im Bereich der siebenbürgischen Militärgrenze”, in: *Gruppenautonomie in Siebenbürgen. 500 Jahre siebenbürgisch-sächsische Nationsuniversität*, ed. by Wolfgang Kessler (Cologne; Vienna: Böhlau, 1990), 245-254; *The Austrian Military Border: Its Political and Cultural Impact*, ed. by Liviu Maior, Nicolae Bocşan and Ioan Bolovan (Iaşi: Glasul Bucovinei, 1994). Titles in English and German have increased in number in the recent years (selectively): Liviu Maior, *Romanians in the Habsburg Army: Forgotten Soldiers and Officers* (Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2004); Irina Marin, *The Formation and Allegiance of the Romanian Military Elite Originating from the Banat Military Border* (PhD thesis, University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2009); Ioan Bolovan, “Die österreichische Militärgrenze und die Siebenbürger Rumänen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Das Naßoder Gebiet”, in: *Kuppeln Korn Kanonen. Unerkannte und unbekanntene Spuren in Südosteuropa von der Aufklärung bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. by Ulrike Tischler-Hofer and Renate Zedinger (Innsbruck; Vienna; Bozen: Studienverlag, 2010), 311-324; Gheorghe Şişeştean, “The House and the Extensive Domestic Group of the Military Border Area (Militärgrenze) from Transylvania and Banat”, *Romanian Journal of Population Studies* 4 (2010), nr. 1: 119-136; Ioan Bolovan, Adrian Onofreiu, “Two Historiographical Perspectives, One Historical Reality: The Năsăud Military Border”, *Transylvanian Review* 23 (2014), nr. 2: 119-137.

<sup>10</sup> Sabine Jesner, “Die siebenbürgisch-sächsische Nation und die Einrichtung der Siebenbürgischen Militärgrenze”, *Danubiana Carpathica* 6 (53) (2012): 237-254; Jesner, “Habsburgische Grenzraumpolitik”.

<sup>11</sup> Wolf, “Granița militară”; Bolovan, Bolovan, “Granița militară”.

authorities in Vienna was militaristic, political reasons played an equally important part.

The military border had previously proven its efficiency in the Southern Slavic area against the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, even from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, during the period of the Transylvanian Principality, there existed a tradition of recruiting the inhabitants of the border regions as a force for internal security, quarantine actions, or guerrilla warfare.<sup>12</sup> In the region inhabited by the Székely, there was an extremely powerful military tradition, which competed, however, with political resentment against the new Austrian authorities. In the regions inhabited by the Romanians (for the most part under the direct administration of the Saxons), the practice of providing military services was performed as a means of obtaining land ownership or escaping servitude.<sup>13</sup>

Militaristic motivation behind the newly founded regiments had both an external and an internal vector.<sup>14</sup> Externally, both the threatening vicinity of the Principalities of Walachia and Moldavia under the Ottoman sovereignty, and especially the reconfiguration of military alliances and the prominence of new rivalries throughout the Seven Years War, raised the issue of securing the south-eastern border of the empire, particularly the province of Transylvania. The small number of regular troops in Transylvania at the time (only three line regiments), together with the province's strategic position at the crossroads of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, weighed heavily on the decision.<sup>15</sup> From this point of view, the creation of border regiments in Transylvania (1761-1766) and the Banat (1768-1774) only prolonged and completed the military cordon in the south and south-west. An attempt to expand this model of organization in the newly occupied region of Bukovina after 1774 ended in failure, which meant that the aforementioned border regiments were the last military units of their kind created in the Habsburg Empire.<sup>16</sup>

The military role of the new units pertained not only to the external politics of the empire, but also to the internal security of some recently, and still insufficiently, integrated territories, from a political and administrative point of view. Especially in Transylvania, the constant opposition of the three medieval estates (*nationes*) – the noblemen, the Székely, and the Saxons – demanded the presence of military troops directly controlled by the imperial authorities. Indeed, some of them were recruited from within the ranks of the traditional adversaries of the three estates: the Romanians freed from the status of servitude. The provincial

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<sup>12</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 15-17; Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 61.

<sup>13</sup> Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 60-61.

<sup>15</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 24-25.

<sup>16</sup> Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 60-61.

elites were clinging to their late medieval privileges and institutions, while openly opposing the centralized views of enlightened absolutism and its representatives; from this point of view, the new military force, together with the social and political standing of its commanders, was meant to help tip the balance in favour of the central authority against the provincial diet, which was dominated by the local Hungarian aristocracy.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond these political reverberations of the creation of border regiments, one should mention the fact that their attributions also explicitly involved cooperation with the regular military units in order to maintain public law and order, prevent migrations over the mountains, implement sanitary quarantines, and discourage smuggling. From these latter perspectives, border regiments represented a perfect instrument for the modernization project promoted by the Theresian enlightened absolutism.<sup>18</sup>

Following the logics of the project, an aspect of considerable importance were the extremely low costs in recruiting and maintaining these regiments. By the calculations of Adolf Nikolaus von Buccow, the project's initiator, maintaining all the seven regiments to be created would cost around 170,000 gulden, with most of this sum being covered by the head tax (*capitation*, *Kopftaxe*) paid by the new border guards. In comparison, maintaining an equal number of regular units would have costed 8.5 times more (around 1.25 million gulden). From an economic perspective, the concept of self-sustainable units, even if irregular and of a lower-than-expected quality, was most appealing to an empire whose financial resources were always stretched.<sup>19</sup>

Following this same modernization and centralization logic, the Austrian authorities hoped that, with these new units, they would be able to consolidate dynastic loyalty among a population that was less susceptible to other forms of discourse or propaganda, while at the same time, as stated earlier, alleviating the centrifugal political tendencies of the provincial estates. In this regard, the new military border can be regarded, up to a point, as a small-scale experiment with intensive enlightened reforms in one of the most backward provinces of the empire.

The ever-present objective of consolidating dynastic loyalty also brings into focus another category of reasons, which went hand in hand with the military and socio-political ones, namely religious. One of the first actions of the Habsburgs

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<sup>17</sup> Bernath, "Die Errichtung", 172-173; Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 32-33; Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 27-29; Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 62-63. For a detailed overview of the quarantine system in Transylvania, see Jesner, "Habsburgische Grenzraumpolitik", esp. 147-258.

<sup>19</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 29-31; Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 65-67.



in Transylvania, within the greater framework of re-Catholicization, was the attempt to attract the entire Orthodox population in the recently occupied region (mostly Romanians) towards religious unification with Rome.<sup>20</sup> The first decades after 1687 saw a series of successes, mainly due to the new authorities' financial, administrative, and military support granted to the Greek Catholics. However, towards the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increase in resurgence movements from the Orthodox community, promoted especially by travelling preachers, who had a major impact on the masses of Romanian peasants.<sup>21</sup> In this context, organizing border regiments and enforcing conversion among the Romanians who desired to be relieved of their servile status to Greek Catholicism were seen as a means of not only promoting unification with Rome within the ranks of a population that was still mainly Orthodox, but also of creating a confessional sanitary cordon, which would limit the contacts between the Transylvanian Orthodox and the ones in Walachia and Moldavia.<sup>22</sup> Last but not least, the increasing influence of Catholicism in the province (albeit involving the Eastern rite), was welcome, given that the Principality of Transylvania had been one of the most important centres of religious reform in Central Eastern Europe. It should be emphasized that this set of religious motivations exclusively concerned the Romanians, since most of the Székely were Catholics.

It is also worth mentioning, as a matter of historiographical notice and warning, that some Romanian historians, in the spirit of the nationalist-traditionalist discourse, have identified another set of motives, related to the efforts of the Viennese authorities to stop the creation of a new, unified national identity in Transylvania and the two principalities under the Ottoman sovereignty by limiting and controlling the migration phenomenon from one side of the Carpathians to the other.<sup>23</sup> According to this logic, the border regiments would have also helped, for example, to inhibit the genesis of a modern Romanian nation. This is, at least, a questionable interpretation, given that a great part of the military border was made up of Romanian units, which particularly acted as a social springboard for the Romanians in Transylvania and a means of transmission between the latter and the Romanians from the other side of the mountains.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Keith Hitchins, "Religion and Rumanian National Consciousness in Eighteenth-century Transylvania", *Slavonic and East European Review* 57 (1979), nr. 2: 214-220.

<sup>21</sup> Bernath, "Die Errichtung", 170-172.

<sup>22</sup> Bernath, "Die Errichtung", 170-172.

<sup>23</sup> David Prodan, "Înființarea regimentelor de graniță", in: *Istoria României*. vol. III (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1963), 514; Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 28; Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Bolovan, Bolovan, "Granița militară", 437-439, 441-442.

## Creation of a new military border in Transylvania

The first plan of organizing the new military units was proposed by General Adolf Nikolaus von Buccow<sup>25</sup> on October 13, 1761 and envisaged the creation of five border infantry regiments of 3,000 soldiers each (three Székely and two Romanian), as well as two cavalry regiments (the Székely hussars and the Romanian dragoons) of 1,000 military units each. Von Buccow suggested that the new border guards should be selected primarily from the ranks of free men, so as not to discriminate against the provincial estates by freeing serfs; and, in the case of Romanians, only Greek Catholics were to be selected, since the Orthodox population was regarded as too close to those of the same faith on the other side of the mountains. Concerning military personnel, only Austrian officers were to be assigned to the Székely regiments, while Hungarian officers would also be acceptable for the Romanian regiments. The border guards would be exclusively subordinate to the military authorities and exempt from paying any taxes, except the *Kopftaxe*. While their payment would be two guldens per month for the infantry and four guldens per month for the cavalry, the guards were supposed to purchase their own equipment, except for the initial weaponry, which would be provided by the state.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, the project was positively received by the Imperial War Council, albeit with constant changes until 1784, when the border regiments in Transylvania reached the stage that is referred to as their “classical” period of activity, meaning the period from the Napoleonic Wars to the revolution of 1848. The first officers arrived in the future military regions in the summer of 1762; and, in the spring of 1763, the first border guards were ready for swearing the oath.<sup>27</sup>

During these first years, the first movements of a growing opposition also took shape. Within the ranks of Romanians, these were mainly caused by the request to convert to Greek Catholicism and strongly manifested in May 1763, during the visit of the provincial governor, General von Buccow, accompanied by the Greek Catholic bishop, Petru Pavel Aron, in the territory of the second Romanian Border Regiment (no. 17) at Salva.<sup>28</sup> The protest, led by Tănase Todoran,<sup>29</sup> who gained fame in the region and was later canonized by the Orthodox Church, was quickly suppressed, but its shockwaves reached the provincial administrative level. Since similar problems emerged in the area of the first Romanian Border Regiment (no.

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<sup>25</sup> Bernath, “Die Errichtung”, 173-174.

<sup>26</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 34-44.

<sup>28</sup> Bernath, “Die Errichtung”, 183-185 (Bernath first identified the Greek Catholic Bishop as Grigore Maior instead of Petru Pavel Aron, a mistake later corrected in Bernath, *Habsburgii și începuturile* (Cluj: Dacia, 1994), 181).

<sup>29</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 44-48.



16),<sup>30</sup> where he was not able to put a stop to the opposing reaction of the Székely either, the governor was immediately relieved of his command over the military border area. The post was handed over to General Josip Šišković (of Croatian origin, but born in Hungary),<sup>31</sup> who emphasized, in front of the Imperial War Council, the need to finalize the militarization process by any means necessary.<sup>32</sup>

In this sense, Šišković decided to execute the main leaders of the revolt in the Romanian regiment and to imprison other instigators (November 1763); as for the Székely, he ordered the notorious Massacre of Siculeni/Mádéfalva (January 1764).<sup>33</sup> His strong-handed measures indeed led to the finalization of the process of creating the Transylvanian military border, while at the same time intensifying, for a while, the migratory flux of Romanians and the Székely from Eastern Transylvania to Moldavia. It was also Šišković who forced the German district of Bistrița/Bistritz to finalize the process of handing over documents regarding the region of the future second Romanian Border Regiment (no. 17) to the military authorities, thus ending, through his trenchant attitude, an administrative dispute that had lasted for several decades.<sup>34</sup>

By the end of 1764, four infantry border regiments were functioning in Transylvania (two Romanian and two Székely) and two cavalry regiments (one of Székely hussars and one of Romanian dragoons). The regulative framework of their activity was constituted through the regulation of March 24, 1764 for the Székely regiments, and the regulation of November 12, 1766 for the Romanian ones.<sup>35</sup> By 1770, the dragoon regiment of Năsăud was disbanded, turned into infantry, and merged with Regiment no. 17, while the territory of the latter was extended with the inclusion of several communes. One last reorganization took place in 1783, when several Romanian communes in the valley of the Bârgău stream were militarized on the direct orders of Joseph II, but without making them convert to Greek Catholicism.<sup>36</sup> To this day, the respective valley shares a somewhat different collective identity than the rest of the regiment.

<sup>30</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 53-57; Bernath, "Die Errichtung", 180-182, 188-191.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. "Joseph Freiherr von Siskovich (1719-1783)", in: *Biographisches Lexikon des Kai serthums Oesterreich*, vol. 35 (Vienna: Druck und Verlag der k. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1877), 32-34; accessed on 13. 11. 2017, <http://www.literature.at/viewer.alo?objid=11783&page=38&scale=3.33&viewmode=-fullscreen>.

<sup>32</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 50.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed description of the events, see Lajos Szádeczky, *A székely határőrség szervezése 1762-64-ben* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvkiadóhivatala, 1908), 159-184.

<sup>34</sup> Šotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 75-77.

<sup>35</sup> Šotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 78-82; Wolf, "Granița militară", 88.

<sup>36</sup> Šotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 77.

## Short- and medium-term effects of the military border's establishment

The creation of the Transylvanian military border, although carried out relatively quickly in the first stage (1761-1764), faced challenges and only reached a stable form after two decades of experimentation. In a classical study, Bernath has emphasized the main problems raised by this political-military initiative of Vienna. As opposed to the Croatian military border, the Transylvanian one spanned over a much more densely populated territory, with a different political tradition, thereby practically functioning as an implementation pillar of centralist politics in a province that was dominated by the estates belonging to an early modern tradition. Not all those who became subject to militarization had a positive view on it either. According to their former military privileges, the Székely enjoyed full fiscal exemptions. However, these exemptions were at that point only partially recognized by the Habsburgs (a one-third exemption during peace time and a full exemption for families at home during war). Furthermore, the rise of 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalism would bring them closer to the growing body of opinion in support of Hungarian nationalism.<sup>37</sup> The Romanians, in turn, as shown above, only reluctantly accepted the need to convert to Greek Catholicism.

Beyond these meta-attitudes, one must never forget the individual attitudes, experiences, and options: in the entire territory that was about to be militarized, there were families or groups of inhabitants who refused to become border guards, for different personal reasons. Most of them were removed from the area, with some of them migrating to the Romanian Principalities. There was no other solution, given the fact that those who explicitly refused the status of border guards in the militarized communes automatically lost all land-based property. The territorial reorganization that followed the militarization process also caused problems for both old and new communities.<sup>38</sup>

The militarization brought with it population movements, including soft “ethnic cleansing” measures. For example, the Saxon Magistrate in Bistrița asked for the permission to have the Romanian population in some villages near the city forcibly evacuated *in corpore* in the area of the future border regiment, in order to settle the Saxons and the Hungarians in the abandoned households. As some of the border guards were forced to enrol, a significant number of desertions is documented for the first years, usually by crossing the mountains, and even into the following decades, although the punishment for the border guards was death by hanging.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Bernath, “Die Errichtung”, 174-176; Wolf, “Granița militară”, 88-89.

<sup>38</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 77-85; Șotropa, *Districtul grăniceresc*, 73-74.

<sup>39</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 40-41, 113-124.

At the micro-administrative level, the creation of the military border was followed by the selection of settlements to be militarized, which led, in time, to disparities in the overall development of the areas, especially in Southern Transylvania, and the persistence of confessional differences, along with all the associated tensions. Last but not least, the combination of civil and military administrations in a relatively small and densely populated territory caused additional administrative problems.<sup>40</sup>

However, following the inevitable turmoil of the establishment years, positive results started to appear over the following decades, although it remains questionable whether, in the short and medium term, they reached the expected level for both the central authority and the locals.

Firstly, the border regiments started to fulfil their main purpose, that of a force responsible for internal order and border security and a military force in external campaigns, and all this with financial costs that were much lower than any other regular alternatives. It may be true that their efficiency in external campaigns was not always as desired, but historical accounts agree on the bravery with which they carried out their duty (the best-known example is the defence of a bridge at Arcole).<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the efficiency of the Austrian Army during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, compared to its opponents, remains an issue open to debate.

Secondly, although Greek Catholicism could not be fully imposed, it nevertheless remained the main denomination in the Romanian military border area. The fact that, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Greek Catholicism slightly outnumbered Orthodoxy among the Romanians in Transylvania is due, among other reasons, to the direct influence and example of the military border region.

Regarding the use of border regiments as a trump card in the relations between the central authority and the provincial estates, fortunately for Transylvania this was not the case, except between 1848-1849, when then lines of ethnic demarcation became obvious: whereas the Romanian regiments chose to support the imperial government, the Székely regiments joined the Hungarian Revolution.<sup>42</sup> Besides, it was the specific experience of the revolution that revealed the weak points in the dynastic loyalty of the military border units, which in turn determined the disbanding of the latter in Transylvania in 1851, irrespective of the ethnic profile.<sup>43</sup> One may say that it is only concerning this historical moment that the assertion of Romanian historians, according to whom the imperial government manifested fears regarding the influence of national ideas within the

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<sup>40</sup> Wolf, "Granița militară", 89.

<sup>41</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 134-135.

<sup>42</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 157.

<sup>43</sup> Göllner, *Regimentele de graniță*, 173-182.

ranks of Romanians in Transylvania and the Danube Principalities, start to become applicable.

Regarding the positive effects on the local population, they surely existed; indeed, recent studies have questioned the Rothenberg scepticism on this matter.<sup>44</sup> The cornerstone of this long process was constituted by the changes in the social and judicial status of the border guards. Militarization freed the border guards-to-be from servitude, breaking their bonds with the provincial aristocracy and replacing them with dynastic loyalism. Serfs were turned into free men and, later on, into citizens. This process of modernization brought about social, political and civic effects, which would, in the long run, reshape not only the border regiments' area, but also the whole of Romanian society in Transylvania. The establishment of border regiments accelerated the formation of a Romanian elite, both through a process of modernization imposed by the new social status and through the accumulation of financial, cultural, and symbolic capital. The financial influx, resulting from the salaries paid to the border guards and the officers' expenses, as well as the increased attention paid to the education system and the selection of officers and NCOs from among the locals, helped in creating a specific identity.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the migration flux to the other side of the Carpathians, towards the Romanian Principalities, continued despite the creation of the military border, while the population comprising the border regiments also felt the negative demographic effects of the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>46</sup>

If the short- and medium-term effects were mostly positive, although with their own downsides, the long-term effects were entirely positive and more deeply felt by both the state and the locals. Despite recurrent social movements and endemic migration over the Carpathians, the military frontier areas slowly prospered, with their population achieving an economic level and social status that were above those of most other Romanian communities, while developing a particular mindset and a sense of local patriotism, which persists to this day. Moreover, after the disbandment of the border guard regiments in 1851, the communities used a large part of the commonly owned wealth of the former units to create school funds, which not only supported the local primary and secondary school system, but also provided fellowships to university students from the families of former border guards.<sup>47</sup> Other types of associations also flourished, transforming

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<sup>44</sup> A dense and systematic analysis can be found in: Bolovan, Bolovan, "Granița militară"; Bolovan, "Die österreichische Militärgrenze".

<sup>45</sup> Bolovan, Bolovan, "Granița militară", 438-441.

<sup>46</sup> Ioan Bolovan, "Demographic Aspects of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Romanian Frontier Guard Regiment (19<sup>th</sup> century)", in: *The Austrian Military Border: Its Political and Cultural Impact*, ed. by Liviu Maior, Nicolae Boșcan and Ioan Bolovan (Iași: Glasul Bucovinei, 1994), 42.

<sup>47</sup> Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 245; Lazăr Ureche, *Fondurile grănicerești*

the former border regiments' area into one of the pillars of the Romanian civil society in Transylvania.<sup>48</sup>

Against this background, a strong feeling of dynastic loyalism persisted throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, long after the dissolution of the military frontier.<sup>49</sup> It remains symptomatic, for instance, that during the dualist period the only two constituencies in Transylvania that persistently sent Romanian deputies to the Hungarian Parliament, thereby not obeying the passivity call from the national political leadership, were situated in the area of the former military border regiments (Năsăud and Făgăraș). Among other causes and explanations, the old loyalty towards the emperor (by now the king) and the state found accommodation with the new political realities and overcame the general level of passivity under the banner of protecting the local interest.

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*năsăudene (1851-1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001); Bucur, *Școlile grănicerești*, 30-42.

<sup>48</sup> Historians have only recently approached the topic of the Romanian civil society in Transylvania and Hungary prior to 1918, so that the part played by the commonly owned wealth of the former border guard regiments has not yet been analysed from this viewpoint. Cf. Liviu Maior, *Habsburgi și români. De la loialitate dinastică la identitate națională* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006), 8-9; Ioan Bolovan, *Asociația Națională Arădeană pentru cultura poporului roman 1863-1918. Contribuții monografice. Ed. A II-a revăzută și adăugită* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia XXI, 2011), 138-147; Sorin Mitu, "Civil Society and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Transylvania", *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Historia* 61 (2016), nr. 2: 16-25.

<sup>49</sup> Bolovan, Bolovan, "Granița militară", 442-444.

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*Vlad Popovici*\*

## **Utemeljenje austrijske Vojne krajine u Transilvaniji i njeni kratkoročni te srednjoročni utjecaji**

### **Sažetak**

Utemeljenje transilvanijskih vojnokrajiških pukovnija nije bila samo vojna već i politička, ekonomska te do određene mjere i vjerska odluka koju je Bečki dvor donio potkraj dugog i skupog Sedmogodišnjeg rata (1756. – 1763.) i to pod specifičnim uvjetima i događajima koji su se događali u Transilvaniji. Ovo utemeljenje vojnog sustava i pukovnija je vrlo vjerojatno glavni razlog zašto je carica Marija Terezija upamćena od strane nekoliko generacija stanovnika Transilvanije, a također ova caričina odluka pripada prema rumunjskoj historiografiji među najpoznatije i najhvaljenije poteze njezine vladavine. Sintetski pregled navedene teme u radu se temelji na relevantnim radovima rumunjske historiografije koju autor obilato upotpunjuje, obzirom na ograničenost šireg korištenja iste od strane povjesničara poradi jezika i slabe diseminacije, najrelevantnijim radovima međunarodne (uglavnom njemačke i austrijske) historiografije. U radu se nakon kratkog uvoda i osvrta na spomenute relevantne historiografske radove, prikazuje kronološkim slijedom razvoj preduvjeta i razloga za stvaranje transilvanijskih krajiških pukovnija s osvrtom na glavne korake tog procesa. Drugi dio rada donosi kratku analizu obostranih koristi i beneficija koje su, kako za Habsburšku Monarhiju i Bečki dvor tako i za lokalno stanovništvo Transilvanije, proizašle iz uspostave vojnokrajiških pukovnija. Dodatno, donosi se i prikaz poteškoća te otpora s kojima su se vlasti susretale prilikom utemeljenja navedenih pukovnija zajedno s osvrtom na kratkoročne i srednjoročne implikacije uspostave ove vojne organizacije na društvo.

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