



INSTITUTIONAL REFORM OF THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN WARFARE (1912-1918) – BETWEEN NECESSITY AND CONSTRAINT –

Ovidiu PĂDURARIU, PhD Student

Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities,
“Ștefan cel Mare” University, Suceava
DOI: 10.55535/RMT.2026.1-2.17

The study analyses the process of institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces during the period 1912-1918, from the perspective of adapting to the requirements of modern warfare. The main directions of the reform are examined – the organization of the forces, the mobilization system, logistics and the armament industry, as well as the formation of the command corps – and the structural limits that hindered their implementation are identified.

The article argues that, although the Romanian state was aware of the need for military modernization, economic, administrative and political constraints determined a fragmented and incomplete process, with direct effects on the operational capacity in the early years of the First World War.

Keywords: military reform; doctrine; mobilization; military institutions; Romanian Armed Forces;



INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Romanian state faced a dual challenge: internal consolidation and integration into an increasingly unstable international system. In this context, the Romanian Armed Forces could no longer function solely as an instrument of traditional territorial defence; instead, it had to evolve into a structure capable of sustaining a large-scale, prolonged, and high-intensity conflict.

The Romanian Armed Forces were undergoing a period of profound transition, situated between the legacy of a classical military model and the growing pressure of the transformations brought about by modern warfare. The experience of the Balkan conflicts of 1912–1913, followed by the outbreak of the First World War, revealed the structural limitations of the Romanian military institution and placed the issue of armed forces reform at the centre of political debates.

The Romanian state harboured considerable strategic ambitions, driven by national objectives and by an international context favourable to the revision of the regional status quo. However, these aspirations were not matched by a corresponding institutional capacity. The armed forces, the principal instrument for the implementation of foreign policy, were affected by dysfunctions in organization, mobilization, logistics, and the training of the command corps – shortcomings that became evident during the direct confrontation with the realities of industrialized warfare.

In this context, the institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces between 1912 and 1918 was neither a linear nor a coherent process planned in advance. On the contrary, it unfolded in a fragmented manner, under the pressure of events and the constraints imposed by the state's limited resources. War acted primarily as an accelerating factor, forcing rapid and often incomplete adaptations, without establishing a favourable framework for systematic modernization.

The institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces between 1912 and 1918 was neither a linear nor a coherent process planned in advance. On the contrary, it unfolded in a fragmented manner, under the pressure of events and the constraints imposed by the state's limited resources. War acted primarily as an accelerating factor, forcing rapid and often incomplete adaptations, without establishing a favourable framework for systematic modernization.



Romania's entry into the First World War was preceded by a relatively long period of neutrality (1914-1916), which was used to prepare the armed forces and adapt military doctrines to the requirements of modern warfare. This period highlighted the discrepancy between doctrine, the experience of the Balkan Wars, and the logistical and industrial realities of the Romanian state.

Romania's entry into the First World War in August 1916 represented the decisive test for a military structure still undergoing reform. The initial failures of the 1916 campaign revealed the gap between pre-existing doctrinal concepts and the realities of a global-scale conflict. At the same time, the withdrawal to Moldavia and the reorganization of the armed forces during 1917-1918 demonstrated the existence of an institutional capacity for adaptation, although one that was harnessed under extreme conditions.

Romania's entry into the First World War was preceded by a relatively long period of neutrality (1914-1916), which was used to prepare the armed forces and adapt military doctrines to the requirements of modern warfare. This period highlighted the discrepancy between doctrine, the experience of the Balkan Wars, and the logistical and industrial realities of the Romanian state.

The main areas targeted by the reform were:

- the reorganization of command-and-control structures;
- the modernization of military training and military educational institutions;
- the adaptation of logistics and mobilization to the requirements of industrial warfare (Torrey, 1998, pp. 25-40).

This article examines the institutional reforms of the Romanian Armed Forces between 1912 and 1918, a period marked by doctrinal, logistical, and organizational transformations generated by the Balkan Wars and the First World War. The study highlights the tension between the necessity of modernization and the economic, logistical, and political constraints faced by the Romanian state. Primary sources from military archives, together with contemporary and modern historical works, allow for a clear assessment of both the progress achieved and the limitations of Romanian military reform.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the institutional reforms initiated during the period 1912-1918, evaluating the extent to which they succeeded in responding to the demands of modern warfare. The central hypothesis is that these reforms were conceived within a modern strategic framework, but implemented in an administrative and economic environment insufficiently prepared for rapid and profound transformation.



The present study aims to analyse the process of institutional reform from an integrated perspective that goes beyond a strictly operational or narrative approach. The emphasis is placed on the internal mechanisms of military transformation, on the relationship between the state and the military institution, and on the manner in which political, economic, and social constraints influenced the capacity for adaptation to modern warfare.

The issue of the institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces in the context of modern warfare (1912-1918) falls within the field of contemporary military history, at the intersection of political history, institutional history, and security studies. The period under analysis corresponds to a phase of accelerated transition, during which the Romanian Armed Forces were compelled to adapt to the profound transformations in the European military phenomenon, generated by the industrialization of warfare, the expansion of mass mobilization, and the redefinition of the relationship between the state, society, and armed forces.

The relevance of this research lies in the need to move beyond a strictly narrative perspective on Romania's participation in the First World War. Although the military campaigns of 1916-1918 have received considerable historiographical attention, the reform of the armed forces has often been treated as an implicit or derivative process, rather than being systematically analysed as a distinct subject of study.

The issue of the institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces in the context of modern warfare (1912-1918) falls within the field of contemporary military history, at the intersection of political history, institutional history, and security studies.

THE ARMED FORCES ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

The 1912–1918 period was crucial for the institutional modernization of the Romanian Armed Forces, shaped by the transformations of modern warfare and by the experiences of the Balkan Wars and the First World War (Strachan, 2001, pp. 50-75). The reforms were primarily aimed at adaptation to industrialized conflict, but they were constrained by limited resources, insufficiently developed infrastructure, and complex political circumstances (Howard, 2009, pp. 110-135).

The analysis of the organization of the Romanian Armed Forces during the 1912-1918 period must be situated within the conceptual framework of the classical theory of war and contemporary studies



The Great General Staff, led in 1913 by General Alexandru Averescu, played the central role in operational planning, the establishment of strategic directions, and the coordination of major military units. Although its responsibilities were clearly defined, its operational command capacity was limited by the absence of a modern command-and-control system, as well as by dependence on bureaucratic procedures that slowed the decision-making process.

concerning the transition from manoeuvre warfare to industrialized warfare. In the Clausewitzian sense, the Romanian Armed Forces represented an instrument of state policy, whose institutional structure reflected the relationship between political objectives, available means, and contextual constraints (Clausewitz, 1982, pp. 37-41).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the organization of the Romanian Armed Forces reflected the structural tension between the 19th-century model of a national army and the emerging demands of modern warfare. The institutional framework adhered to the principles of general mobilization, mass armed forces organization, and centralized command; however, the capacity to adapt to the new operational realities – namely the increased density of firepower, the industrialization of conflict, and the decisive role of logistics and command structures – remained limited. In this context, the reforms initiated after 1912 sought a gradual adjustment of existing structures to the political, financial, and geopolitical constraints of the Romanian state rather than a radical doctrinal transformation.

The political and military leadership of operations during the Second Balkan War (June-July 1913) was exercised by the Council of Ministers and the Great General Staff, under the direct authority of King Carol I, who served as supreme commander. This structure reflected the classical model of military subordination to political authority, characteristic of European states at the beginning of the 20th century (Kirițescu, 1922, pp. 45-47).

The Great General Staff, led in 1913 by General Alexandru Averescu, played the central role in operational planning, the establishment of strategic directions, and the coordination of major military units. Although its responsibilities were clearly defined, its operational command capacity was limited by the absence of a modern command-and-control system, as well as by dependence on bureaucratic procedures that slowed the decision-making process (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 1913, pp. 61-64).

For the 1913 campaign, the Romanian Armed Forces mobilized approximately 330,000 men, organized into several army corps, each composed of infantry divisions and support units. The chain of command was structured along relatively rigid hierarchical levels: Great

General Headquarters – army corps – divisions – brigades – regiments (Brătianu, 1938, pp. 102-105). This organization reflected a predominantly hierarchical model, designed for manoeuvre operations over large areas, but less suited to flexible inter-arms coordination and rapid responses to unforeseen situations. The commanders of army corps and divisions had limited autonomy, with major decisions being taken at higher levels (Torrey, pp. 14–16).

The Great General Headquarters, organized for the duration of military operations, functioned as the supreme body of operational command. It exercised both planning and executive responsibilities, which led to an overlap of functions and an excessive burden placed upon the central level of command (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, file 1913, pp. 3-9). Despite these limitations, the 1913 campaign demonstrated the Romanian Armed Forces capacity to achieve rapid concentration and strategic advance, in the absence of major resistance from the adversary. Nevertheless, the relative operational success concealed structural deficiencies that would become critical in the context of the First World War (Kirițescu, pp. 58-62).

The experience of the Second Balkan War, together with broader technological developments in Europe, highlighted the gap between the doctrines adopted and the Romanian Armed Forces actual combat capabilities (Hall, 2000, pp. 130-150). Romania came to recognize the necessity of adapting to the new form of industrial warfare, characterized by mass mobilization, the extensive use of artillery and heavy automatic weapons, inter-arms coordination, and complex logistical systems (Murray et al., 1994, pp. 201-230).

The institutional reforms targeted the armed forces structure, particularly through the reorganization of divisions and army corps, the creation of specialized support structures, and the modernization of military education by updating curricula in military schools and sending officers abroad for training, primarily to France and Germany (Murgescu, 2010, pp. 146-160).

During the 1912-1916 period, the Romanian Armed Forces were organized on the basis of a territorial system designed to facilitate rapid mobilization and the reinforcement of units through reserves.



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

Romania came to recognize the necessity of adapting to the new form of industrial warfare, characterized by mass mobilization, the extensive use of artillery and heavy automatic weapons, inter-arms coordination, and complex logistical systems.



The division of responsibilities between the political and military levels often remained ambiguous, a fact highlighted in the correspondence between the Ministry of War and the Great General Staff during the years 1914-1916. The decision-making process was further affected by external interventions and by the absence of an institutional culture of long-term planning.

The army corps represented the fundamental operational level, each being responsible for a specific geographical area and for the associated recruitment, training, and mobilization infrastructure. Although effective within the framework of territorial defence, this organization proved rigid in relation to the requirements of operational manoeuvre and the rapid concentration of forces.

The infantry division represented the basic tactical unit, generally structured into two brigades, each composed of two regiments. Although numerically comparable to European standards, Romanian divisions revealed deficiencies in terms of heavy artillery, communications equipment, and organic logistical services. Cavalry, organized into separate brigades and divisions, continued to be conceived primarily as a manoeuvre and strategic reconnaissance branch; however, its role was progressively undermined by technological developments and the emergence of trench warfare.

The Great General Staff constituted the conceptual and organizational core of the armed forces, being responsible for strategic planning, the drafting of regulations, and the coordination of mobilization. Between 1912 and 1916, it attempted to harmonize command structures with Western models, particularly those inspired by France, a tendency reflected in military laws and regulations, as well as in the operational instructions issued (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 3/1912, pp. 1-18). Nevertheless, the division of responsibilities between the political and military levels often remained ambiguous, a fact highlighted in the correspondence between the Ministry of War and the Great General Staff during the years 1914-1916. The decision-making process was further affected by external interventions and by the absence of an institutional culture of long-term planning (AMR, Ministerul de Război Collection, file 88/1914, pp. 4-11).

A constant concern for institutional adaptation can be identified through the studies, reports, and regulations drafted after the Balkan Wars, which included assessments regarding the need to increase the flexibility of command structures and to develop auxiliary services considered essential in a prolonged conflict (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 12/1912, pp. 3-9; file 47/1913, pp. 15-22).

In order to highlight the concern of military decision-makers with regard to the legal regulation of the Romanian state's military organization, it is important to mention several normative acts issued prior to the Great War: the *"Law on the Organization of the Armed Forces"*, promulgated in 1908 and amended in 1910, 1911, and 1913; the *"Law on the Staff Service"* of 1909, which established the responsibilities of the offices within the Great General Staff; the *"Gendarmerie Law"* of 1908, through which the Gendarmerie became an integral part of the Romanian Armed Forces; the *"Regulation on the Organization and Functioning of the Ministry of War"* of 1912, which regulated the division into services and directorates; the *"Regulation of the Staff Service"* of 1912, which defined the structure and responsibilities of the Great General Staff within the Ministry of War and reinforced the separation between the Great General Staff (strategic level) and the staff services of major commands (army corps and divisions); and the *"Regulation on Civil Obligations during Mobilization"* of 1913, which ensured coordination between the military and civilian institutions in the context of Romania's intervention in the Second Balkan War by defining the responsibilities of local authorities and the procedures for requisitions, thereby marking the transition toward total mobilization.

From the perspective of military theory, the organization of Romanian military structures can be situated within the paradigm identified by the German historian Hans Delbrück, who distinguished between the strategy of annihilation and the strategy of attrition. The Romanian command structure was conceived, at least at the national level, for rapid and decisive operations of annihilation; however, the actual resources of the state in fact imposed an attritional approach, for which the institutional structure was insufficiently prepared (Delbrück, 1920, pp. 3-15).

From an organizational standpoint, the Romanian Armed Forces entered the First World War with a command structure that broadly reflected the classical early 20th-century model, inadequately adapted to the requirements of industrialized and coalition warfare (Torrey, pp. 45-48).



From the perspective of military theory, the organization of Romanian military structures can be situated within the paradigm identified by the German historian Hans Delbrück, who distinguished between the strategy of annihilation and the strategy of attrition.



The Great General Staff, headed at the time of Romania's entry into the war by General Vasile Zottu, was responsible for planning, coordination, and overall operational command. Its internal structure, however, was overburdened by the accumulation of responsibilities and by the absence of an efficient command-and-control system adapted to simultaneous operations on multiple fronts.

The supreme command of the armed forces was exercised, in accordance with the Constitution and the military legislation in force, by King Ferdinand I of Romania in his capacity as commander-in-chief. The political decision regarding Romania's entry into the war and the establishment of the general strategic direction belonged to the Crown Council and to the Liberal government led by Ion I.C. Brătianu, thereby introducing a dual dimension – political and military – into the process of strategic command (Kirițescu, pp. 211-215). The Great General Staff, headed at the time of Romania's entry into the war by General Vasile Zottu, was responsible for planning, coordination, and overall operational command. Its internal structure, however, was overburdened by the accumulation of responsibilities and by the absence of an efficient command-and-control system adapted to simultaneous operations on multiple fronts (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 1916, pp. 7-15).

For the direct conduct of military operations, the Great General Headquarters was established as the central organ of operational command, coordinating the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Armies, as well as the Northern Army, which operated on distinct fronts. The overlap of responsibilities between the Great General Staff and the Great General Headquarters generated ambiguities within the chain of command and delays in the transmission of orders (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, file 1916, pp. 22-29). Although the structure based on armies and army corps was, in theory, adequate, the absence of a common operational practice and of high-level command exercises reduced the coherence of military actions during the critical phases of the 1916 campaign (Brătianu, 1938, pp. 187-190).

The Romanian Armed Forces were organized into structures consisting of armies, army corps, divisions, and brigades, in accordance with an established hierarchy. Army and corps commanders had limited autonomy, being required to seek approval from the central command level for major decisions. This excessive centralization negatively affected the armed forces capacity for rapid response to enemy manoeuvres, particularly during the counteroffensive of the Central Powers in the autumn of 1916 (Kirițescu, pp. 256-260).



The staff structures at the level of large units were insufficiently prepared for inter-arms coordination and for managing a large volume of operational information, a situation that intensified confusion and contributed to the fragmentation of the military effort (AMR, Corpuri de Armată Collection, file 1916, pp. 41-46).

From an institutional perspective, the Romanian command structures of 1916 may be characterized as inadequate for the complexity of modern warfare. The centralized command model, the absence of a coherent operational doctrine, and the insufficient professionalization of staff structures contributed decisively to the initial strategic failure. Nevertheless, these deficiencies must be interpreted within the context of the structural constraints of the Romanian state and the limited time available for adaptation. The 1916 campaign emphasized more the problems rather than their causes, representing the moment in which they became fully evident, thus serving as the starting point for the extensive reorganization undertaken during 1917-1918.

The experience of the 1916 campaign led to the accelerated restructuring of the higher command system. The support provided by Allied military missions and the integration of foreign advisers contributed to the professionalization of the staff system, simultaneously revealing the Romanian Armed Forces dependence on external expertise. Under the influence of the French Military Mission, led by General Henri Mathias Berthelot, the Great General Staff underwent a process of professionalization accompanied by the adoption of modern principles of operational planning and command, closely aligned with the concepts of Ferdinand Foch regarding unity of command and inter-arms coordination (Foch, 1911, pp. 56-63).

Under the influence of the French Military Mission, led by General Henri Mathias Berthelot, the Great General Staff underwent a process of professionalization accompanied by the adoption of modern principles of operational planning and command, closely aligned with the concepts of Ferdinand Foch regarding unity of command and inter-arms coordination.

The organization of the combat branches and services reflected a structural imbalance between combat forces and support elements. Infantry concentrated the majority of personnel, while artillery, engineering units, medical services, transport, and supply structures remained insufficiently developed, a deficiency repeatedly highlighted in the reports of branch inspectors during the period 1913-1915 (AMR, Inspectorate de armă Collection, Inspectoratul Infanteriei,



The reforms implemented between 1916 and 1918, including the expansion of the role of artillery and the reorganization of engineering units and logistical services, represented reactive responses to the constraints of attritional warfare rather than the outcome of anticipatory institutional planning.

file 19/1913, pp. 10-18; Inspectoratul Artileriei, file 27/1915, pp. 5-14). This configuration was suitable for a limited war of manoeuvre, but entirely inadequate for a war of attrition, characterized by high material consumption and the necessity of inter-arms coordination.

The Great General Staff developed plans for doctrinal reform based on Western experiences and the lessons of the Balkan Wars. The key principles included inter-arms coordination, centralized planning, and preparation for mass mobilization within the framework of industrial warfare (Doughty, 2005, pp. 20-35). Preparing the armed forces for such a conflict involved not only structural reforms, but also numerous challenges regarding the allocation of material and industrial resources (Murgescu, pp. 123-140), emphasising significant shortcomings in the use of logistics and communication networks.

The reforms undertaken in the period preceding Romania's entry into the Great War focused primarily on the reorganization of large units, the adaptation of command structures, and the clarification of relations between hierarchical levels. The objective was to create large units capable of manoeuvre and inter-arms cooperation; however, reality demonstrated that these formations were often understaffed or insufficiently trained. The persistence of rigid structures, inherited from the 19th century, limited operational flexibility, while the reform process itself was frequently slowed by institutional inertia.

The reforms implemented between 1916 and 1918, including the expansion of the role of artillery and the reorganization of engineering units and logistical services, represented reactive responses to the constraints of attritional warfare rather than the outcome of anticipatory institutional planning (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, Ordine și jurnale de operații, file 56/1916, pp. 20-33; file 14/1917, pp. 2-9). These measures were implemented under the immediate pressure of the front, in a context of limited resources and significant human losses.

THE MOBILIZATION SYSTEM AND THE RESERVE ISSUE

In the military thinking of the early 20th century, mobilization did not represent a mere administrative act, but rather a fundamental strategic instrument situated at the intersection of political decision-making and the state's actual military capacity. In the Clausewitzian sense, mobilization constituted the moment in which latent military potential was transformed into armed forces capable of action, being profoundly conditioned by the institutional structure, the economic infrastructure, and the social cohesion (Clausewitz, pp. 31-36).

For Romania, the mobilization system was conceived as an expression of the mass national army model, based on universal conscription and the integration of reserves into the wartime structure. It demonstrated the awareness of the decisive role of rapid mobilization in modern conflict, while also revealing the objective limitations imposed by the transport network, the reduced industrial capacity, and the uneven level of training among reservists (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 41/1912, pp. 2-11; file 66/1913, pp. 7-18).

Mobilization represented one of the most sensitive components of the modern military system. Romania developed a relatively extensive reserve system; however, it was unevenly distributed and poorly integrated from a logistical perspective. Mobilization plans envisaged the rapid transformation of the peacetime structure into a wartime one through the activation of reserves and the creation of additional units. In practice, the mobilization of 1916 revealed systemic deficiencies that hindered the integration of reservists into military units, including the lack of trained personnel, shortages of wartime equipment, and difficulties in coordinating transportation (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, *Jurnale de operații*, file 73/1916, pp. 12-35; *Correspondență operativă*, file 81/1916, pp. 4-19). These problems were not exclusively military in nature, but also reflected the infrastructural and administrative limitations of the Romanian state.

The mobilization system of the Romanian Armed Forces was founded upon the military legislation adopted at the end of the 19th century and subsequently adapted through regulations and instructions issued



The mobilization of 1916 revealed systemic deficiencies that hindered the integration of reservists into military units, including the lack of trained personnel, shortages of wartime equipment, and difficulties in coordinating transportation.



Romanian reserves were conceived for a short and decisive conflict rather than for a war of attrition, a factor that intensified the negative consequences of Romania's late and incomplete entry into the logic of industrialized warfare.

by the Ministry of War. The Law on the Organization of the Armed Forces and the mobilization regulations established the principles for bringing peacetime units to wartime strength through the use of trained reserves and annual conscription contingents. Detailed mobilization plans were drawn up, structured according to army corps and military districts, highlighting the rigid and territorial character of the system (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 9/1914, pp. 1-24). This rigidity proved functional within the framework of territorial defence, but it limited the capacity for rapid operational concentration, as became evident during the military campaign of 1916. The issue of reserves constituted one of the major structural vulnerabilities of the Romanian Armed Forces during the Great War. Although, numerically, the reserve system made possible the mobilization of a considerable force, the level of training, cohesion, and equipment remained uneven. Reports issued by branch inspectors and commanders of large units frequently highlighted deficiencies in the preparation of reservists, particularly regarding the use of modern weaponry and integration into complex tactical structures (AMR, Inspectorate de armă Collection, Inspectoratul Infanteriei, file 22/1914, pp. 5-17; Inspectoratul Artileriei, file 31/1915, pp. 9-21). In addition, internal political tensions and external pressures influenced decisions concerning the armed forces structure and mobilization (Buzatu, 2003, pp. 290-310).

From the perspective of military theory, this discrepancy may be interpreted through the analysis proposed by Hans Delbrück, who emphasized the dependence of mobilization efficiency on the state's capacity to sustain a prolonged war. Romanian reserves were conceived for a short and decisive conflict rather than for a war of attrition, a factor that intensified the negative consequences of Romania's late and incomplete entry into the logic of industrialized warfare (Delbrück, pp. 41-52). Numerical mobilization was not accompanied by a corresponding logistical and industrial mobilization, which reduced the armed forces capacity to sustain the war effort over the medium term (Liddell Hart, 1929, pp. 144-151).

The dramatic experience of the 1916 military campaign led to a profound revision of the mobilization system and the management of reserves. Under the coordination of the French Military Mission

and the reorganized Great General Headquarters, measures were adopted for the selection, reassignment, and intensive training of reservists, with emphasis placed on the homogenization of units and the strengthening of tactical cohesion (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, file 18/1917, pp. 1-26). This reorganization confirms the observations of the British historian John Keegan regarding the transformation of modern warfare into a total phenomenon, in which military success depended upon the state's ability to integrate human resources into a coherent and adaptable institutional system (Keegan, 1998, pp. 203-210).

LOGISTICS AND THE ARMAMENT INDUSTRY

In the context of modern warfare, logistics ceased to represent merely an auxiliary field of military art and became a decisive structural component of combat capability. The evolution of conflicts at the beginning of the 20th century confirmed the Clausewitzian observation that armed forces cannot be separated from the material base that sustains them. In this sense, logistics became the concrete expression of the relationship between the state, the economy, and war (Clausewitz, pp. 43-47).

For Romania, this transformation generated acute challenges, as the predominantly agrarian economic structure, the insufficiently developed transport infrastructure, and the limited industrial capacity profoundly conditioned the organization and functioning of the military logistical system. The documents produced and the measures undertaken during the period 1912-1914 indicate only a partial awareness of these limitations, without their being overcome through a coherent anticipatory strategy (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 58/1912, pp. 6-19; file 71/1913, pp. 11-27).

The logistical services of the Romanian Armed Forces were organized into distinct functional branches: quartermaster services, transportation, military medicine, veterinary services, and technical services (AMR, Ministerul de Război Collection, Regulamente ale serviciilor logistice, file 12/1911, pp. 1-22). This organization reflected an administrative model inspired by the 19th century, suitable for a short-term conflict but insufficient for sustaining an industrialized



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

The evolution of conflicts at the beginning of the 20th century confirmed the Clausewitzian observation that armed forces cannot be separated from the material base that sustains them. In this sense, logistics became the concrete expression of the relationship between the state, the economy, and war.



At the outbreak of the First World War, the Romanian armament industry was still in an incipient stage of development. Domestic production capacities were limited primarily to infantry ammunition, weapons repair, and certain engineering materials, while heavy weaponry, artillery ammunition, and modern equipment were obtained almost exclusively through imports.

war of attrition. The experience of 1913 made it possible to identify several logistical shortcomings, including problems related to field supply and the underestimation of the difficulties associated with the theatre of operations (Hall, 2000, pp. 135-170).

Reports frequently highlighted the lack of specialized personnel, the insufficiency of motorized transport resources, and the excessive dependence on the railway network (AMR, Inspectorate de servicii Collection, Inspectoratul Intendenței, file 33/1914, pp. 4-18). From the perspective of modern military theory, such deficiencies contradicted the principles formulated by the British military historian J.F.C. Fuller, who emphasized the decisive role of logistical continuity in maintaining operational freedom of action (Fuller, 1926, pp. 102-110).

At the outbreak of the First World War, the Romanian armament industry was still in an incipient stage of development. Domestic production capacities were limited primarily to infantry ammunition, weapons repair, and certain engineering materials, while heavy weaponry, artillery ammunition, and modern equipment were obtained almost exclusively through imports (AMR, Ministerul de Război Collection, Situația industriei de armament, file 94/1915, pp. 2-15). This external dependence is documented in the correspondence between the Ministry of War and foreign suppliers, as well as in the reports concerning war stockpiles prepared prior to 1916 (AMR, Ministerul de Război Collection, file 17/1916, pp. 5-28). From the analytical perspective proposed by Hans Delbrück, the Romanian state's inability to sustain an autonomous military production capacity limited its real strategic options, pushing the armed forces toward a logic of rapid engagement incompatible with a war of attrition (Delbrück, pp. 88-96).

The 1916 campaign unequivocally revealed the limitations of the Romanian logistical system. Rapid mobilization exhausted existing reserves, while the disruption of external commercial links generated an acute crisis in ammunition, equipment, and medical supplies. Operational journals and reports of the Great General Headquarters describe major difficulties in supplying the units engaged with the enemy, with direct consequences for their capacity for resistance and manoeuvre (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, file 64/1916, pp. 10-36).



In the analytical terms employed by the British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart, the Romanian Armed Forces entered a “battle of resources” that it was unable to sustain, as the absence of a robust logistical infrastructure transformed tactical failures into strategic crises (Liddell Hart, pp. 158-165).

After the withdrawal to Moldavia, military logistics became one of the priority areas in the armed forces reorganization. Under the coordination of the Great General Headquarters and with the support of the French Military Mission, measures were adopted for the rationalization of consumption, the centralization of depots, and the reorganization of military transportation (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, file 21/1917, pp. 1-24).

At the same time, the Romanian state undertook sustained efforts to develop a minimal war industry adapted to existing conditions. A slight increase in the domestic production of ammunition and auxiliary materials was recorded during the period 1917-1918, although it remained insufficient to eliminate external dependence (ANR, Ministerul Industriei și Comerțului Collection, file 42/1917, pp. 7-29). Institutional reform also targeted logistics and mobilization through the development of depots, railway transportation, and communication networks (Murgescu, pp. 125-145).

The modernization of the Romanian Armed Forces was strongly affected by the economic constraints of the state and by political priorities. Military budgets were insufficient to sustain reforms across all sectors, leading to significant disparities between planned doctrine and the troops’ actual support capabilities (Hitchins, 1994, pp. 210-230). Efforts to develop domestic production capacities were both delayed and inadequate, while logistics remained one of the principal weaknesses of the Romanian military system.

In the analytical terms employed by the British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart, the Romanian Armed Forces entered a “battle of resources” that it was unable to sustain, as the absence of a robust logistical infrastructure transformed tactical failures into strategic crises.

TRAINING OF THE COMMAND BODY

In modern armed forces, the command corps represented the link between military doctrine, institutional organization, and the reality of the battlefield. The quality of officers’ training determined not only the effectiveness of tactical and operational leadership, but also the armed forces capacity to assimilate the changes imposed by the evolution of warfare. In Clausewitzian terms, the officer embodied “military



For the Romanian Armed Forces, the period 1912-1918 represented a critical interval during which the traditional system of training the command corps – designed for a short war of manoeuvre – was confronted with the demands of industrialized warfare and inter-arms command.

judgment”, being required to act under conditions of uncertainty, friction, and political pressure (Clausewitz, pp. 49-55).

For the Romanian Armed Forces, the period 1912-1918 represented a critical interval during which the traditional system of training the command corps – designed for a short war of manoeuvre – was confronted with the demands of industrialized warfare and inter-arms command. Military leaders became aware of this discrepancy, yet institutional solutions were neither coherently anticipated nor implemented prior to Romania’s entry into the war (AMR, Marele Stat Major Collection, file 63/1913, pp. 2-14).

The initial training of the command corps was carried out within the officer candidate schools and the Superior War School, institutions that reflected the French model of military education. The curricula of these institutions emphasized the study of tactics, military regulations, and military history, to the detriment of subjects related to logistics, war economy, and the command of large units under conditions of attritional warfare (AMR, Școala Superioară de Război Collection, file 7/1912, pp. 1-18). The selection of officers was based on formal criteria of education and seniority, while the mechanisms for evaluating practical competence remained limited. Certain dysfunctions also existed within the promotion system, favouring institutional conformism at the expense of initiative and adaptability (AMR, Ministerul de Război Collection, file 29/1914, pp. 6-21).

The professional culture of the Romanian command corps was marked by a strong attachment to existing regulations and by a rigid interpretation of official doctrine. In the terms proposed by Hans Delbrück, this orientation reflected the persistence of a conception of decisive, annihilator warfare that was insufficiently adapted to the realities of a prolonged conflict (Delbrück, pp. 60-68).

The experience of the Balkan Wars and of the military manoeuvres conducted prior to 1916 was not sufficiently exploited for the thorough reform of command thinking. Campaign journals and subsequent evaluations reveal significant difficulties in inter-arms coordination and in the conduct of operations at the army corps level (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, *Jurnale de campanie*, file 48/1916, pp. 9-27).



The military campaign of 1916 revealed the structural limitations of the Romanian command corps. The lack of experience in conducting large-scale operations, deficiencies in communication, and insufficient cooperation between levels of command contributed to major operational failures.

From the perspective of modern military theory, the observations of the British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart regarding the necessity of intellectual flexibility among commanders are particularly relevant for interpreting the failure (Liddell Hart, pp. 171-178). The Romanian command corps was constrained by a rigid doctrinal framework that limited its capacity for rapid adaptation to unforeseen situations.

Following the disastrous outcome of the 1916 campaign, the reform of the command corps became a strategic priority. Under the influence of the French Military Mission and through the reorganization of the Superior War School, intensive staff courses, practical exercises, and rigorous evaluations of officers' competence were introduced (AMR, Marele Cartier General Collection, file 26/1917, pp. 3-22). Institutional reform also targeted the professionalization of the command corps through the modernization of military schools and the sending of officers abroad for specialized training. Nevertheless, this process remained uneven and failed to ensure a homogeneous level of competence throughout the entire officer corps.

Romanian military thought continued to be influenced by the French, German, and British military schools:

- France: the concept of the decisive offensive and the emphasis on high troop morale;
- Germany: rigorous planning, organization, and discipline;
- United Kingdom: inter-arms cooperation, logistics, and modern communication techniques (Doughty, pp. 3-28).

The institutional transformation under analysis broadly confirms the observations formulated by the British military historian John Keegan regarding the central role of military leadership under the conditions of total war, in which the effectiveness of military action depends upon the commanders' capacity to coherently integrate the human, material, and moral resources of the state into a unified strategic effort (Keegan, pp. 231-238). At the same time, the process of doctrinal modernization

From the perspective of modern military theory, the observations of the British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart regarding the necessity of intellectual flexibility among commanders are particularly relevant for interpreting the failure. The Romanian command corps was constrained by a rigid doctrinal framework that limited its capacity for rapid adaptation to unforeseen situations.



was hindered by the resistance displayed by certain segments of the officer corps, which remained attached to operational and cultural models that were characteristic of classical warfare. This tendency confirms the analysis advanced by Samuel P. Huntington concerning the institutional inertia of the military profession (Huntington, 1957, pp. 59-85). This structural tension between the necessity of innovation and the persistence of tradition constituted a major limiting factor in the rapid and coherent implementation of new doctrinal concepts.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces during the period 1912-1918 highlights the profoundly constrained and predominantly reactive character of the process of military modernization. Far from being the result of a coherent anticipatory strategy, this reform was driven by the cumulative pressure of the transformations associated with modern warfare and by the structural limitations of the Romanian state, manifested at the political, economic, and administrative levels. Under these conditions, the armed forces modernization proceeded in a fragmented, uneven, and often incoherent manner, failing to decisively reduce the gap between the strategic objectives assumed by the state and the actual institutional capabilities.

The evolution of the forces organization, the mobilization system, logistics, the armaments industry, and the training of the command corps all reflect this structural imbalance. The uneven pace of reforms and the absence of systemic coordination intensified the vulnerabilities of the military institution, while the failures of the 1916 military campaign cannot be interpreted solely through the lens of command or execution deficiencies, but rather as the expression of an accumulation of institutional dysfunctions developed during the period preceding Romania's entry into the war.

The situation of the Romanian Armed Forces thus confirms the observations of both classical and modern military theory regarding the relationship between the state and war. In the Clausewitzian sense, the armed forces functioned as an instrument of policy; however, the effectiveness of this instrument was strictly conditioned by the material and institutional resources of the state. Economic constraints,

The armed forces modernization proceeded in a fragmented, uneven, and often incoherent manner, failing to decisively reduce the gap between the strategic objectives assumed by the state and the actual institutional capabilities.



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

dependence on imported weapons and ammunition, and the weak development of transport infrastructure significantly reduced the Romanian Armed Forces strategic room for manoeuvre and limited their capacity to sustain a prolonged military effort.

From the analytical perspective proposed by Hans Delbrück, the choice of a strategy of rapid annihilation proved incompatible with the realities of a war of attrition characteristic of the global conflict. This incompatibility explains why the armed forces genuine adaptation occurred only under the extreme conditions of 1917-1918, when institutional reform became a necessity for survival.

The direct experience of war thus acted as the principal catalyst of institutional change. The armed forces reorganization in Moldavia, under the coordination of the Great General Headquarters and with the support of the French Military Mission, demonstrated the existence of a genuine capacity for adaptation. The professionalization of the command corps, the improvement of training, the reorganization of logistics, and the increased efficiency of the mobilization system and reserve management all contributed to the restoration of the Romanian Armed Forces combat capability.

Nevertheless, the reforms implemented during the period 1917-1918 were accelerated and incomplete in character, being constrained by the duration of the conflict and by the unstable geopolitical context of 1918. They should not be interpreted as the completion of a modernization process, but rather as the foundation for a subsequent institutional evolution developed during the interwar period.

This reality explains why, despite the existence of a formally modern military doctrine and a declared political will, the Romanian Armed Forces encountered major difficulties during the initial phases of the war and were compelled to undergo an accelerated process of adaptation based on direct operational experience. The period 1914-1916 was decisive in this regard: doctrinal modernization was genuine, but insufficiently supported by adequate resources, infrastructure, and administrative capacities.

The armed forces organization and structure during the 1912-1918 period illustrate, overall, a process of forced reform, marked by compromise solutions and partial adaptations. The mobilization system functioned effectively as a quantitative mechanism, but initially

The armed forces reorganization in Moldavia, under the coordination of the Great General Headquarters and with the support of the French Military Mission, demonstrated the existence of a genuine capacity for adaptation. The professionalization of the command corps, the improvement of training, the reorganization of logistics, and the increased efficiency of the mobilization system and reserve management all contributed to the restoration of the Romanian Armed Forces combat capability.



The institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces between 1912 and 1918 unfolded at the intersection between the objective necessity of adapting to modern warfare and the structural constraints of the state.

failed as a qualitative and integrative instrument, while logistics and the armament industry constituted critical points of institutional vulnerability, with direct effects on operational capability during the 1916 campaign.

The training of the command corps likewise reflects the structural tension between tradition and modernity, between institutional continuity and the necessity of rapid adaptation to the demands of modern warfare. The partial correction of these limitations during the years 1917-1918 demonstrates that the transformation of military leadership was not the result of a deliberate doctrinal choice, but rather of a historical necessity imposed by the strategic context.

In conclusion, the institutional reform of the Romanian Armed Forces between 1912 and 1918 unfolded at the intersection between the objective necessity of adapting to modern warfare and the structural constraints of the state. Incomplete and often delayed, this reform nevertheless demonstrated the military institution's capacity for transformation under conditions of existential crisis, confirming that military modernization is not a linear process, but one profoundly dependent upon context, resources, and political will.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR)/National Archives of Romania, Ministerul Industriei și Comerțului/Ministry of Industry and Commerce Collection, file 42/1917, pp. 7-29.
2. Arhivele Militare Române (AMR)/National Military Archives, Marele Stat Major/Great General Staff Collection, files 3, 12, 41, 58/1912; Marele Stat Major Collection, files 47, 63, 66, 71/1913; Marele Stat Major Collection, file 9/1914; Marele Cartier General/Great General Headquarters Collection, files 48, 56, 64, 73, 81/1916; Marele Cartier General Collection, files 14, 18, 21, 26/1917; Ministerul de Război/Ministry of War Collection, file 12/1911; Ministerul de Război Collection, files 29, 88/1914; Ministerul de Război Collection, file 94/1915; Ministerul de Război Collection, file 17/1916; Corpuri de Armată/Army Corps Collection, file 1916; Inspectorate de armă/Branch Inspectorates Collection, Inspectoratul Infanteriei/Infantry Inspectorate, file 19/1913, file 22/1914; Inspectorate de armă Collection, Inspectoratul Artileriei/Artillery Inspectorate, file 27, 31/1915; Inspectorate de servicii/Services Inspectorate Collection, Inspectoratul Intendenței/Quartermaster Inspectorate, file 33/1914; Școala Superioară de Război/Superior War School Collection, file 7/1912.



3. Brătianu, Gh.I. (1938). *Armata Română și politica externă*. București.
4. Buzatu, Gh. (2003). *O istorie a politicii externe românești*. București: Mica Valahie.
5. Clausewitz, von C. (1982). *Despre război*, București: Editura Militară.
6. Delbrück, H. (1920). *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, vol. IV. Berlin: Georg Stilke.
7. Doughty, R.A. (2005). *Pyrrhic Victory*. Harvard: University Press.
8. Foch, F. (1911). *Des principes de la guerre*. Paris: Berger-Levrault.
9. Fuller, J.F.C. (1926). *The Foundations of the Science of War*. London: Hutchinson.
10. Hall, R.C. (2000). *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*. Routledge.
11. Hitchins, K. (1994). *Romania 1866-1947*. Oxford: University Press.
12. Howard, M. (2009). *War in European History*. Oxford: University Press.
13. Huntington, S.P. (1957). *The Soldier and the State*. Harvard: University Press;
14. Keegan, J. (1998). *The First World War*. London: Hutchinson.
15. Kirițescu, C. (1922). *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României*, vol. I. București.
16. Liddell Hart, B.H. (1929). *Strategy*. London: Faber&Faber.
17. Murgescu, B. (2010). *România și Europa*, Iași: Editura Polirom.
18. Murray, W. et al. (1994). *The Making of Strategy*. Cambridge: University Press.
19. Strachan, H. (2001). *The First World War*, vol. I. Oxford: University Press.
20. Torrey, G.E. (1998). *Romania and World War I*. Kansas: University Press.