

The Militärgrenze as a Cultural Border: From the Aspect of Generale Normativum in Re Sanitatis issued in 1770

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At the last presentation held in Nagoya on 6th November, 2011, the author reported the R. J. W. Evans' argument on borders. Evans deals with borders and frontiers at the one whole chapter in his book (Chapter 7 "Frontiers and National Identities in Central-European History" in *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Central Europe c.1683-1867* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2006). The author summarized and introduced Evans' argument on borders for better understanding the *Militärgrenze*.

Evans says that people firstly used natural landscapes like rivers and mountains as a border. This is a natural border. On the other hand, people developed another kind of borders called a historic border. Evans describes its formative history;

"At the top, or most general, level came the state frontier. But, as we have seen, this was often identical with lesser borders and certainly coterminous with them. ... We can think of the whole development as a palimpsest of civil and ecclesiastical borders, whose lowest layers were almost always long-standing and broadly accepted" (Above-mentioned Evans' book, p. 118)

The historic borders were intensified especially from the first half of the eighteenth century by absolutist states like the Habsburg Empire.

The historic borders have not only competed with the natural borders, but also with artificial borders. That is;

"..., the rival to a historic frontier was not a natural one, but its converse: an *artificial* frontier; the revival by those in power of the original, arbitrary delineation of boundaries, now in the quite different and sophisticated guise of a conscious policy to restructure existing borders in the interests of those two priorities of eighteenth-century governments, enlightened rationality and absolutist militarism." (p.122)

After the treaty of Carlowitz was concluded (1699), the *Militärgrenze* was newly arranged and created from military requirements and demands.

Although historic configurations resisted almost all attempts at a more logical or practical ordering, in the nineteenth century a newly 'discovered' basis was accepted commonly above all in East European countries. That new ground to demarcate was ethnicity.

"Now (after 1848---TOYA) ethnicity, 'natural' perhaps in cultural terms, was thoroughly 'artificial' with respect to existing boundaries." (p. 127)

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“At most, then, nineteenth-century governments contemplated modest internal adaptations to the network of traditional frontiers across the face of Central Europe. The twentieth century has seen massive international transformations, the coming of the artificial frontier with a vengeance: ...” (p. 131)

“Closely associated with this, indeed its prime justification, has been the triumph of the ethnic principle, the rationale of the ‘nation-state’, whereby the cultural and linguistic nation is conceived as an immutable, complete, and self-determining entity, and the limits of the state are drawn to accommodate it.” (p. 131)

Now, in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, we all know that borders and frontiers are artificial and constructive.

In this essay, among the artificial borders, the author focuses on the *Militärgrenze*, which was in fact created in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The *Militärgrenze* has plenty of characteristics, that is, military, social and ethnic faces and so on. We here pay attention to its cultural characteristic. The reason why I use the word ‘cultural’ is that by drawing the new boundary, the *Militärgrenze*, in the south of the Habsburg Empire in the eighteenth century, many differences of value have come up to a surface of the indigenous society.

What can be differences of value in this case? If we list up the newly born differences of value, which confronted each other over the boundary, the *Militärgrenze*, concretely, the self/others and the ordinary/the not-ordinary could be the most important and notable differences of value.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the others behind the border were apparent: the Turks. However, in the eighteenth century, for example, when Maria Theresa issued *Generale Normativum in Re Sanitatis* in 1770, the others behind the border, who could be called enemies, have become less visible. The Turks around the border between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire have disappeared from sight for a long time. Instead of the Turks, the enemy in the eighteenth century turned to be the pest (plague), or infected persons.

Usually it is said that the edict issued in 1770, *Generale Normativum in Re Sanitatis*, completed the *Cordon sanitaires*, the hygienic line. Therefore, guards and workers at the *Rastell*, a quarantine station, were strictly required not to pass the infected, or at least the infection presumed persons and commodities.

“Except for above-mentioned workers, horse guards are also employed, who must swear and watch those people, animals and commodities not to enter our countries and our territories secretly. Because those who want to enter from the Ottoman Empire have no other possibility but to pass through a quarantine station.” (Balázs P. 2007: Mária Terézia 1770-es egészségügyi alaprendelete. II. köt., p.363.)

It was not so obvious as before to find an enemy on the border, because the others behind the border were no more the Turks, but just infection presumed persons. Apparent indexes such as a language and an appearance have not been useful any more.

Although Maria Theresa's edict in 1770, on the one hand, prohibited immigration of suspicious persons very strictly, it, on the other hand, tolerated ordinary trades by people living along the border.

“Every day mutual trades between subjects of the Ottoman Empire and our subjects under the Captain in Karlstadt should be promoted. ... Since we would like to promote mutual trades, we tolerate imports of those commodities, which are not susceptible to the plague, even at the other places than a quarantine station on the condition that no doubt on danger comes from the Ottoman Empire. However, this procedure is just taken to necessary commodities for each other, and is restricted to the people living in both sides of the border in order that good neighborhood relationship for mutual trade promotion continues in the most favorable way. ... ” (Balázs P., p. 368)

In addition to this, we should know that in the eighteenth century, workers and guards on the border were merely peasants at their home originally. Here the difference of value, the ordinary/the not-ordinary, can be found.

Finally, we would like to consider whether the newly constructed border, the *Militärgrenze*, has really created new differences of value, that is, new cultural situations along the border. As regards the ordinary/the not-ordinary, the fact that every day's trades were tolerated in 1770 means actually nothing has changed on the spot, at an indigenous society.

Concerning the self/others, the author concludes that the *Militärgrenze* just divided those people who could not, or should not, be divided. Croatian historians, Sanja Lazanin and Natasa Stefanec give us a good suggestion on this theme:

“ ... The majority of the active military on all three sides (the Ottoman, the Venetian and the Habsburg sides---TOYA) consisted of indigenous population and fugitives. This meant that on every side of the Triplex Confinium the population of the same or similar ethnic background was involved in centuries-long military operations. But, these aspects of border life remain to be explored.” (S.Lazanin/N.Stefanec, "Habsburg Military Conscription and Changing Realities of the Triplex Confinium (16th-18th Centuries), p.105)

This suggestion would have validity not only to the Triplex Confinium but also to all along the *Militärgrenze*, from Senj to Beszterce, from the Adriatic Sea to the Carpathian Mountains.

It is often said that the *Militärgrenze* has created 'others' behind it and 'the not-ordinary life' along it. However, as we have seen in this essay, the *Militärgrenze* has not created 'others' nor 'the not-ordinary', which deserve special mention. If the *Militärgrenze* has created real 'others' and 'the not-ordinary', it is worthy of being called as a cultural border. But, nearly nothing was created in fact. 'Others' behind the border were not so different from he himself inside the border (of course, the person himself inside the border can't be the pest), and 'ordinary life' along the *Militärgrenze* was not so destroyed nor reconstructed as considered.

So, we should not call the *Militärgrenze* as a cultural border, should we? Yes, we should! The author does not think that we should not. As long as those areas contained the *Militärgrenze*, those areas are worthy of being called as a cultural border. As we have seen, there ‘the ordinary’ was maintained in a way, even though there existed the *Militärgrenze*, which compared with the Great Wall of China. By drawing the strict border, the *Militärgrenze*, the real self/ others difference did not come up. People remained as before, after the *Militärgrenze* was constituted. People have kept their own ordinary life like the other day, even after the *Militärgrenze* was formed. In this meaning, areas along the *Militärgrenze* were very unique cultural zones, and because of creating such a unique area in the world, the *Militärgrenze* was certainly a noteworthy cultural border.

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