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The Architecture of Borderscapes

Territorial Defence and Propaganda: The Involvement of Fortification Architecture in the Rise of the Modern Nation State in Europe.

Abstract

The years between 1871 and 1945 mark a peak of the construction of fortification architecture in Europe which corresponds with the political and territorial reorganisation of the continent in nationalistic terms. This text analyses relations between the socio-political processes of the nation-state development of this period and fortification architecture as a distinct architectural category. In a transdisciplinary approach, the study asks for the correlation between the architectural fortification of borders and the nationalisation of states, thus addressing a relationship between architecture and politics as different entities. Usually, nation-state studies are not concerned with architecture, and the study of fortification architecture, which primarily focuses on typology, design and technologies, do not provide a link to the subject of nation-state development. This study traces such a link by a historic survey which reveals that fortification architecture relates to nationalisation processes in different roles. This involvement of fortification architecture implies changing aspects: For one thing, the function of fortification architecture in order to defend the territorial demarcation of nationalising states, and, for another thing, its capacity of becoming valuable for nation-state ideology and propaganda. In both roles, as military installation and as symbol, fortification architecture is again linked to understandings of territory, border and nation which constitute elements of nationalisation processes.

Introduction

In terms of architectural history, fortification architecture (the military building) constitutes the third main architectural category next to religious architecture (the sacred building) and profane architecture (the secular building).[1] It can be asserted that each of these architectural categories requires preconditions for its existence as actual buildings.[2] As for the construction of fortification architecture between 1871 and 1945, a precondition was the nationalisation processes of states and the interstate and internal tensions caused by them. I speak of processes because the nation state did not emerge in an instant, but represents a development that encompasses different entities such as the state (territory related) and nation (idea related). In the history of its development, the nation state was hardly ever able to reach a state in accordance with its ideological origins in the sense of establishing demographic, cultural or linguistic homogeneity in regard to the defined space of the state territory.[3] Nationalising states therefore depend on other acts and narratives of national meaning. Based on the purpose of fortification architecture to secure the authority over a property or territory by military means, the fortification of borders became a decisive act in the emergence and existence of states. In the 19th century the issue of state building was joined by the issue of nation building. Initially associated with maintaining the territorial integrity as organisational principle of the state, fortification architecture was now connected to nationalist politics as a process over time. The history of fortification architecture in the age of nationalisation shows that its functional impact on this process varied from military to symbolic meaning, while, again, the idealisation of fortification architecture could not have occurred in disconnection of its military function: of militarily conditioning the borderscapes of a state. This thesis is founded upon the following investigation of the involvement of fortification architecture in the nationalisation processes of states concerning its specific military functions and its subsequent connection to nationals propaganda, e.g. propagated by mass media. With reference to Bruno Latour's method of network tracing[4], we can argue that nationalisation combined a number of different entities into a network. This network did not remain unchanged over time, but incorporated and phased out entities, changed dimensions, processed functional references of fortification architecture in terms of military as well as symbolic values, and deteriorated for most parts after 1945 in absence of conditions for its existence. In a retrospective approach, the analysis aims at identifying links that nationalisation had established between fortification

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[1] From ancient times to the early modern period fortification architecture was an integral part in the shaping of towns and landscapes through the construction of castles, city walls, bastions and citadels. While in the modern period the technical and strategic preconditions of warfare changed, new fortification designs such as the fort and the bunker emerged. The planning of fortification architecture has cultivated specific technical terms and It has been the subject of theoretical discourses concerning design, function, construction and aesthetics.

[2] In difference to religious or profane architecture, the purpose of fortification architectural is the enablement of survival under the conditions of war or to perform actions of warfare based on sheltered spaces.

[3] Cf. Peter M. Judson, "Nationalstaaten waren Völkerkerker", interview by Wolfgang Ritschl, Ö1 Wissenschaft, November 11, 2018, https://science.orf.at/v2/stories/2946416/.

[4] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

architecture, state territory, notions of nation and their political implementation, and nationalist propaganda.

Prelude: The primacy of territory

'[M]ost scholarly accounts trace the formation of the modern state system to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, roughly with the end of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the peace agreement that resulted in the Treaty of Westphalia. This agreement is important first and foremost in establishing sovereignty over territory as an organizing principle of the system of states – i.e. the "territorialization" of space. [...] From the very beginning, sovereign authority was situated in a bounded territory'.[5]

17th century France is considered an outstanding 'model for state making and border-delineation'.[6] Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban – general, fortification architect and Marshal of France in the service of King Louis XIV – had a decisive part in this by devising his concept of the *pré carré*: The elimination of foreign spheres of influence within the state's territory and the fencing of this territory through a barrier system consisting of fortresses and fortified towns. At that time, fortifications were local enclaves that possibly were in possession of a foreign power. '[T]he *Pré Carré* represented an innovative way of thinking at a time when any given fortification might fit into a scheme of provincial defence at best, but not a truly national one'.[7] Vauban drew up the plans for a (double) belt of fortifications to fence off the French state territory to be ruled by the king. His work as chief architect of France's new frontier coalited with the development of the centralised state whose authority was represented by the king. The territorial demarcation of France set new standards for the governability and administration of the state on the basis of a differentiated conception of space. David Bitterling has argued that Vauban's arrangement of France's border fortifications complied with his intent to establish a domanial economic system in France which requires the idea of an absolute space.[8] The domain refers to an enclosed estate which is characterised by territorial and administrative homogeneity in contrast to an external environment. Vauban, also owner of an estate, conceived the reorganisation of France as a domain ruled by the king in order to realise France´s political, economical and military objectives. Bitterling understands the spatial delimitation and genesis of France not as the development from a natural space to a political territory, but as a development based on the conception of a homogeneous space.[9] This concept is reflected by the *Pré Carré* and the construction of the protective cordon of fortresses. Territory and its defence had become defining aspects of the state, even if the enforcement of the state authority within this territory might not yet be equally effective or

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5   Matthew Longo, *The Politics of Borders: Sovereignty, Security, and the Citizen after 9/11* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 36.

6   Ibid.

7   Paddy Griffith, *The Vauban Fortifications of France* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2006), 12.

8   David Bitterling, "Marschall Vauban und die absolute Raumvorstellung," in *Vermessen, Zählen, Berechnen. Die politische Ordnung des Raums im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Lars Berisch (Frankfurt a. M. / New York: Campus Verlag, 2006), 65-74.

9   Ibid. 73-74.

developed (e.g. in remote areas). But territorial demarcation and border control created a constant for the state as system. The same applied to the development of the nation state, whereby territorial homogeneity constitutes the organisational principle of the state while nationalisation represents a process on the basis of respective ideologies.[10]

Notions of nation and fortification architecture: 1871-1918

The nationalist reorganisation of Europe in the second half of the 19th century brought about the most significant transformation of the state order since the Napoleonic Wars. The founding of the German Empire and of the Kingdom of Italy changed the European state system and power relations which had been dominated for a long time by the large territorial states such as France in opposition to the federal organised states of Central Europe.[11] The final phase of the German Unification was marked by three wars (the Second Schleswig War (1864), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870/71)) which brought Schleswig, Holstein and Saxe-Lauenburg under German governmental power, led to the separation of Austria from the German unification process, and severely weakened France which lost Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. The founding of the German Empire in 1871 contributed to the severe dynamic that had already existed in the relation between the historic territorial states and the recently emerged states and political entities. As immediate consequence of the lost war with Prussia, Austria negotiated a compromise with Hungary in 1867. The founding of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire ensured the survival of the Habsburg Monarchy as a major power for the time being. The Italian political movement for national unity – the *risorgimento* – had resulted in the proclamation of the Italian monarchy in 1861, while the territorial extend of the Italian nation state was fixed for the time being in 1870 with the capture of the sovereign Papal states of Rome. (This event meant the authority loss of France in this region, being the protective power of the Pope and Rome, but at that time severely weakened by the Franco-Prussian War.)

In order to secure the fragile peace between the European states as well as their partly fragile constitution, diplomatic actions were constantly carried out in the following decades after 1871 to produce mutual assistance or neutrality pacts between the countries. As pacts were sealed against the interests of other states or alliances, dissolved because of irreconcilable rivalry between states, or were unable to dispel misgivings and mistrust, the states were determined to secure their borders where pacts fail to guarantee their safety.[12] Fortification architecture comprised a considerable part of the building programmes of the European states

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[10] The nation state associates two modern concepts of order: state and nation. The nation is an ideal order of demographic, cultural or linguistic homogeneity by which a collective of people is determined as a unit. The concept of the nation state might be traced back to the early modern period, but its execution has been mainly driven forward by the national movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

[11] Mario Rainer Lepsius, *Interessen, Ideen und Institutionen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 257-58.

[12] Herfried Münkler, "Irrtümer und Illusionen im großen Krieg," filmed March 4, 2014 at W-Forum des Deutschen Bundestages, video, accessed July 20, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFV0vAkevus.

between the second half of the 19th century and the First World War. This applied not only to the major powers such as Austria-Hungary, Germany, France or Italy, but also to smaller or neutral states such as Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland. The construction of fortifications acted as a national implemented compensation for the inability of international diplomacy and alliance policies to eliminate the threat of war and the possibility of a massive violation of the territorial integrity of a state. Naturally, international conflicts would have been first staged at the borders between two opposing states. Yet the concept and reality of the invulnerability of the state borders also generated – as we argue – a foundation for the inner unity of a state while the character of its national identity could be still in a diffuse state. Fortifications served the security needs of a state, which secured, at the same time, its very existence as nationalising state.

If we continue to focus on the German Empire as an example of a nationalising state, we find that its emergence as a nation state was foremost the manifestation of a political spirit which was characterised by the struggle for the territorial definition of the state rather than by having established an internal homogeneity defined by one nation or culture. The consolidation of its territorial extent – the notion and reality of the empire as a territorial unity – offered a constant opposite to the more difficult formation of its internal order. On the one hand, within its territory, the empire was ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse, populated by French ethnic groups in the West, Danish ethnic groups in the North, and Polish ethnic groups in the East. This led to open conflicts between the parties of the ethnic minorities, which appealed to the principle of nationality in their own right, and the German state as political nation.[13] On the other hand, the German Empire comprised not all German nations as Austria was not an integral part. Groups such as the Pan-German League pleaded for an integration of Austria into the German Empire on the base of ethnic-nationalist ideals. These demands again contradicted the conception of the German Empire as 'limited nation state' and as imperial nation shaped by the state.[14] The idea of the strong state (rooted in the political tradition of Prussia, represented by the first Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and carried further by his successors such as Bernhard von Bülow) provided the foundation of the German Empire and the common bond of the nation state while it dismissed the notion of an unconditional implementation of the principle of nationality precisely for the reason of maintaining the strength of the state.[15] In this context, the protection of its territorial integrity as an obligation of the strong state did not simply serve the protection against outer enemies, but played an integrative part and a role in the inner construction of the nation. While the character of the nation remained diffuse because of the problem of ethnicity, the will to shield the state and to make sacrifices in protecting this common bond served as an element to unite the people as nation.[16]

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[13] Theodor Schieder, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1992), 27-29.
[14] Ibid., 48-53.
[15] Ibid., 56.
[16] Ibid., 51.

When nation-state studies talk about the strong state and its will to protect its territorial integrity as nationalising state, it simultaneously marks the moment when fortification architecture comes into play. As Klaus Hildebrand has argued, the militarisation of the political realm after 1871 was an compensating effect in regard to the safety needs of the states.[17] Accordingly, 'the intermingling of statesmanship and the art of war' led to the situation that political actions were increasingly influenced by military thinking.[18] However, despite the close interrelation between politics and war, politics and the military remain two different societal systems. This is why politicians can *refer* to military options and can *construct* the threat of their implementation, but they usually do not contribute meaningfully to military planning. The systematic fortification of the frontiers is part of the military protection of the state and therefore task of the respective military cadres and divisions. First and foremost, the presence and function of fortifications has meanings in the context of the military as an institution of the nation state which is able to enter into relationships with other state institutions. Immediately after its establishment, the German Empire conceived a national fortress system. Between the 1870s and the beginning of the 20th century, the order and distribution of fortresses throughout the territory of the German Empire changed significantly[19] and clearly shifted towards the frontiers in accordance with the extension of the territory of the German Empire and the definition of its border, as it is indicated by Figure 1.

O First class fortress to withstand a formal attack.
● Second class fortress to withstand a forceful attack.

O Fortress or naval bases to be held in first place.
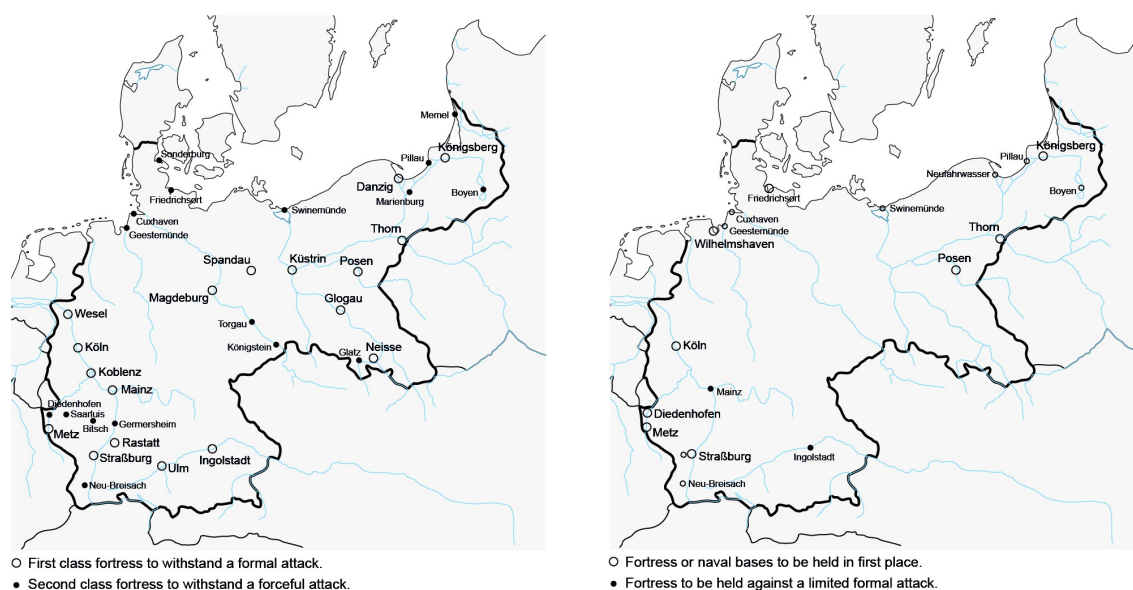● Fortress to be held against a limited formal attack.

Figure 1: Transformation of the national fortification system layout of the German Empire between 1872 (left) and 1900 (right). Figure based on Rolf, *Armour Forts*, 16 and 42.

17 Klaus Hildebrand, "Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk. Akteure und System der europäischen Staatenwelt vor 1914," in *Der Schlieffenplan. Analysen und Dokumente*, ed. Hans Ehlert (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006), 41.

18 Ibid., 25.

19 Rudi Rolf, *Armour Forts and Trench Shelters. German Imperial Fortification 1870-1918* (Middelburg: PRAK publishing, 2017), 16 and 42.

Designing and positioning of border fortifications in the period before the First World War implied two important aspects: First, in order to concentrate limited resources, border fortifications were built opposite those countries which posed a threat of potentially becoming a military opponent in a conflict. Furthermore, the fortification of border sectors was not based on a continuously developed defence line, but limited to places which had become an integral part of military strategies for securing the deployment and movement of the own troops as well as for blocking, denying or channelling enemy troop movements for effective defence. Second, the conception of the fortress system as a selection of fortified places rather than as a continuous line characterised borderscapes not as *limes*, but as a frontier – as a border area which also is a field for military operations. Understanding the border as a frontier instead as a demarcation line causes problems in regard of the national self-image at the very moment when strategic reasons might also shall allow for enemy movements on the own territory, while, at the same time, the territorial integrity has special significance as a common ground for the inner unity defended by the strong state. This means that there is, on the one side, the reality of the military defined territorial space that is co-constituted by the fortification system and, on the other side, necessarily its abstraction in order to have an impact on the inner or public conception of the nation state. This even more so as fortifications, forts, bunkers and military installations got further detached from the places and areas they protected as a consequence of the improvement of the siege artillery, which made it necessary to construct defensive positions in a wider radius. Moreover, the existence of frontier fortifications which were built between the late 19th and the early 20th century was kept a secret by tendency.[20] The opposing sides had to learn about the fortifications through intelligence activities and espionage.[21]

In the face of borderscapes (characterised as frontiers), of a remote geographical distribution of fortifications, and of secrecy, the question arises how the immediate presence of fortifications have led to their enmeshment in nationalisation processes. For instance, in the case of the capital of Lorraine, Metz, the fortification construction program created a rivalry to other aspects of the nationalisation process. The town had passed from France to Germany after the war of 1870/71. As an important fortress town located at the frontier towards France, the German military maintained its ramparts and conducted its further fortification through the construction of a ring of forts. These actions implicated spatial restraints for the expansion of the town as it was hampered by the requirements for the town's defence. The military functional determination of the town conflicted with other interests of national politics, in particular with the economic growth of the town, a concomitant increase of the German population, and hence the expansion of the town as part of a the germanification process.[22] On

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[20] Kaufmann, J.E. and Kaufmann H.W., *The Forts and Fortifications of Europe, 1815-1945: The Central States* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2014), 31.

[21] Willibald Rosner, "Fortifikation und Operation. Die Sperre Lavarone-Folgaria. Vol.1." (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2007), 370-82.

[22] Rolf Wittenbrock, "Die Stadterweiterung von Metz (1898-1903)," *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 18, no. 3 (1991): 4.

the German side, the future town expansion was conceived as a demonstration of the efficiency of German town planning opposite the antagonist French population.[23] The housing shortage and the absence of modernisation measures, caused by the primacy of military over civic interests in the fortress town, generated yet something like a collective experience for the population of Metz.[24] The construction and presence of fortifications had local impacts through land requisition, the operation of construction sites, the setting up of restricted zones for the public, military exercises, and the accommodation of the garrison. The militarisation of the frontier also increased the nationalist strain on the local population in the borderland. As Willibald Rosner[25] has described in regard to the Austrian-Italian frontier in the area of the high plains of Lavarone and Folgaria (where the Austrians built seven works), this applied especially to minorities (in this case the Cimbrian people) on account of their national credibleness, while the pressure came not only from this side of the border but also from beyond under the impact of irredentist movements. Another problem were nationalist motivated provocations and tours over the border which again increased the fear of espionage activities, directed at fortified places, and of threats for the national security.[26]

As for Metz, an agreement for the town expansion was finally reached in 1901.[27] At the time of the agreement, the implementation of another extensive fortress building programme had already set in around Metz as well as Diedenhofen (Thionville) in order to create a strategical lynchpin for possible future German military actions against France. Eight modern and vast group fortifications with additional works, shelters, depots and batteries were built in a radius of eight to ten kilometres to the town centre as part of the so called *Moselstellung* (Moselle Position). In Metz in 1910, of a population of 68.598 people, every fifth inhabitant was military personnel.[28] The soldiers of the Metz garrison only manned the fortifications during exercises and in the case of emergency. During the rest of the time, the garrison stayed in barracks and peace time accommodations. The soldiers constituted not only a link between the fortifications and the nearby population, but also to the other parts of the empire from which they were called on duty. We can find indications how the manning of the forts of the Moselle Position had been elevated as a form of national duty which is reflected by its architecture. Some of the austere military buildings feature ornaments (Figure 2). The ornaments belong to specific symbolics, calling upon devotion, unity and decisiveness in the duty for the fatherland. Heraldic figures relate to the imperial dynasty as national identification figure as well as to the houses of the ruling class. Sword and ceremonial baton symbolise the national military authority. Oak and laurel leaves are part of the generally intelligible symbolic language of the German nation. Applied text lines call upon 'loyalty' and refer to the 'development of strength through unity'.

23 Ibid., 9.

24 Ibid.,21.

25 Rosner, *Fortifikation und Operation*, 76-84.

26 Ibid., 89.

27 Wittenbrock, *Stadterweiterung von Metz*, 15.

28 Folz (without first name), "Metz als deutsche Bezirkshauptstadt (1870-1913)." in *Lothringen und seine Hauptstadt. Eine Sammlung orientierender Aufsätze*, ed. A. Ruppel (Metz: Druck und Verlag des Lothringer Verlags- und Hilfsvereins, 1913), 373.

At the fortified frontier, this ornamentation functioned as an augmentation of the physical manifestation of what historians have called a specific national ideology of integration as part of a double-sided process which characterises the building of a nation: 'inward integration, outward delimitation'.[29] Also outward delimitation has an inside: It exists in binding the nation together as a participating collective that is able to act while facing the Other who often enough turns into an image of the enemy.[30] In the logic of the nation state, the focus on the Other or the enemy has also an effect on the definition of the own society of a nation. That is particularly expressed by the ornaments of the Moselle Position. They were applied to the buildings in order to boost the morale of the soldiers on duty in the fortifications while serving the cause of the nation and to appeal to their fighting abilities as part of an able-bodied collective.

Figure 2: Moselle Position. Ornamentation 'of a forward infantry shelter near the Moselle River north of Thionville' with nationalistic symbols. Courtesy of Clayton Donnell.

At this point, it is difficult to assess precisely how the intended indoctrinating effect of the built environment and its ornamentation not only affected the soldiers but furthermore the local population and in further consequence the larger collective of the nation. However, a case in which fortifications collectively entered the focus of a nation was the war; on the one hand, the very condition for which fortifications were built and, on the other hand, the time when the integration power of nationalism is most pronounced.[31] When fortifications were involved

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[29]   Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa* (München: Beck, 2000), 40.

[30]   Ibid., 41.

[31]   Ibid., 53.

in combat actions, they attained value as objects of national identification. Throughout the First World War, the battle for fortresses and even single forts turned into events of national meaning. The public elevation of the French fortress of Verdun to a national symbol, following the massive attack of the Germans on the fortress in February 1916, prompted the French generals to commit vast amounts of troops and material to withstand and counter the attack, even after the French army had already declared the military value of the fortress as insufficient at the beginning of the war and had disarmed many of the forts to use the weaponry elsewhere. On the other side of the front, the capture of Fort Douaumont (an important cornerstone of the French frontier defences at Verdun) by the Germans after four days of the initial attack led to widespread celebrations throughout the German Reich. The capture of the fort turned into a surrogate action while the development of the battle and the war did not favour Germany.[32] Another example is the double siege of Przemyśl in Galicia – the largest fortress of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire – by the Russians in WW1, which became an event of national momentousness. In reaction to the failings of the Austrian-Hungarian operations against the Russian army, a possible fall of the fortress was declared a threat to the existence of the Double Monarchy itself. This attitude was reflected by the public opinion as well as the planning of subsequent military operations to relief the garrison of Przemyśl and to finally retake the fortress.[33] The siege, loss and regain of the fortress developed into one of the last great national myths of the Habsburg Empire.[34] The essential purpose of fortresses to protect the state from the enemy penetrating deeper in its territory also increased their importance as national symbols at the very moment of battle. These experiences contributed to the willingness of many European nation states to commit vast resources to fortification construction programmes in the period between the world wars.

Fortification architecture and nation state propaganda: 1919-1945
The end of the Great War in 1918 resulted in the transformation of the European state system through the dissolution of three empires (Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire) and the independence of a number of nations and their transition into statehood which implicated dramatic territorial losses for some states, massive changes in the course of borders between new and old states, and new national demarcations. International politics failed to establish a stable post-war order in Europe, also affecting the imperial and colonial systems. The new borders drawn after the war favoured the victorious powers, generated ethnically diverse state territories, and left the development of nation states – according to the postulate of the right of a people to self-determination – incomplete in many places. The approach of the 1920s to secure the new territorial determinations through contractual agreements was not adequate for creating a perspective for permanent peace. With the aggravation of nationalist

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[32] Gerd Krumreich, "Verdun 1916 - Die längste Schlacht im 1. Weltkrieg," filmed November 2016 at Stifung Demokratie Saarland, video, accessed July 20, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGot8qdPbNc.

[33] Graydon A. Tunstall, *Written in Blood: The Battles for Fortress Przemysl in WWI* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016). 20-22.

[34] Cf. Franz Forstner, *Przemyśl: Österreich-Ungarns bedeutendste Festung* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1987).

politics in the 1930s many European states returned to the construction of fortification systems as means to satisfy their safety needs and to cement the extension of their borders in the truest sense of the word.
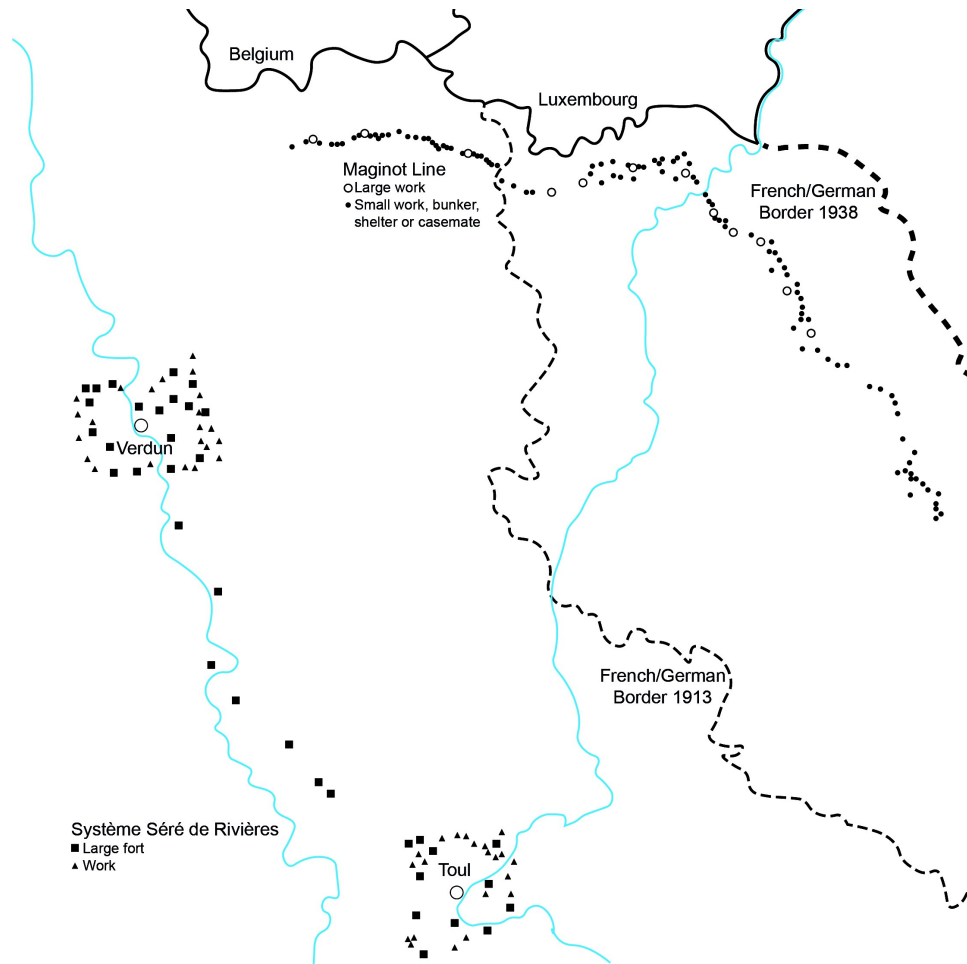

Figure 3: An example of the historic transformation of borderscapes from frontier to border, reflected by the change of the characteristics of the French fortification system along the Belgium, Luxembourg and German borders, constituted by the Système Séré de Rivières (1874 - 1914) and by the Maginot Line (1928-1940). Illustration by the author.

The experiences of the Great War and a a strong sense for the primacy of territorial integrity as a foundation for the nationalising state led to a military-spatial and political-spatial transition of borderscapes in the interwar period. This was characterised by the mutation of borderscapes from frontiers to borders; by a shift from the fortification of selected places, within a militarily-strategically defined zone, to the construction of fortified lines, located at the edge of the state territory. Since the time of Vauban's bastion fortress system, military and fortification technologies had changed significantly. Fortifications and forts as an architectural unit were more and more dissolved into individual elements in order to minimise their vulnerability as targets of bombardments. The end of this development was marked by the single bunker. The use of concrete as construction material and of prefabricated steel components were accompanied by a standardisation of bunker designs. Massive fortification construction

programmes were now realised with a multitude of bunker types which were arranged along the borders at some depth. In this way, longer stretches of a border could be fortified. The (all around) fortification of particular places with forts and works was superseded by the bunker line (Figure 3). Border areas became vast construction sites which also reached into remote areas or roughed terrain such as the Alps as it was the case with the Italian Alpine Wall or the French Maginot Line. Where landscapes constituted natural barriers or were considered as impassable, the line of bunkers was less well developed or disconnected. More vulnerable stretches of a border were fortified first, while the realisation of projects in other sections had to wait or was cancelled. This did not make border fortifications the impregnable wall as the propaganda often suggested.

Besides their actual military value, fortifications increasingly developed power as national symbols. It has been argued that fortification systems of the 1930s like the German *Westwall* can be conceived as a 'symbolic construction site' whose function was not only determined by its military use but also by its capability to generate political effects through media generated images. In the competition between countries, giant technical structures such as highways, dams, reservoirs and canals turned into symbols which should embody the superiority and power of a country and its political system.[35] If we recognise the fortification projects of the 1930s as such a symbolic architecture, then the French Maginot Line first set the standards. Concerned over fascist Italy and the possibility of a reinvigorated German Reich, the French Military already began in the early 1920s to draw up plans for the protection of the eastern border, now again encompassing the re-gained territories of Alsace and Lorraine. 'Despite a rather unstable parliamentary system that led to frequent changes in the French government during the inter-war period, security of the national borders remained, for the most part, a priority.'[36] The Maginot Line consists of various types of shelters, casemates and works. The most impressive fortifications are the bunker systems of the *gros ouvrages* – large works with a number of combat blocks which are interconnected through underground tunnels. The main tunnels are equipped with a narrow gauge railway, which enters the complex through defendable entry blocks several kilometres behind the combat zone, transporting troops and ammunition. Underground spaces, equipped with electricity and ventilation system, are located in between the entry and combat blocks which contained barracks, the sick bay, the kitchen, the powerhouse, the communication centre, as well as storage facilitates for ammunition, food and material. Such well-developed fortifications are the exception along the Maginot Line, but they were best suited for propaganda images. Without revealing much about the true layout of the works, they were used to generate the impression of a formidable defence system. The technicity of the *gros ouvrages* steered the imagination at home and abroad. The result was a complete exaggeration of the Maginot Line and its elements in news,

35   Anreas Dix, "Der Westwall im Rahmen von Raumplanung und Strukturpolitik in der NS-Zeit," in *Zukunftsprojekt Westwall*, ed. Karola Fings and Frank Möller (Weilerswist: Verlag Landpresse, 2008), 59, **quoting** Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Entfernte Verwandschaft. Faschismus, Nationalismus, New Deal 1933-1939* (München / Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2005), 129-168.
36   Kaufmann, J.E. et al, The Maginot Line: History and Guide (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2014), 14.

reports, films, drawings and illustrations. Accounts suggested the existence of a continuous interconnected fortification system, linked by a subway, bristling with heavy weapons and equipped with enormous multilevel underground structures. For instance, in its January 3, 1938 issue, the *Life* magazine featured a three page (pp. 28-30) picture story about the Maginot Line in reaction to the release of the French spy movie *Double crime sur la ligne Maginot*.[37] Film sets were obviously used for the display of bunkers in the movie. The *Life* report intended to give an impression of the Maginot Line by combining photographs, film stills, diagrams, and artistic drawings. Some of the reports or about the Maginot Line were pure science fiction but generated an image of France as able-bodied nation based on its alleged technical abilities. (Some of the propaganda images are used to the present day in news, popular or social media with the intention to impart an idea of the Maginot Line, but which often has little in common with its reality.) The idealisation of the Maginot Line in terms of its strength and technical character also defined France's own national propaganda in order to build up confidence in the safety of the nation (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Cover of the French weekly magazine Détective, Nr. 580 from January 1940 showing French troops in a Maginot Line fort. The text on the cover describes the Maginot Line as an impregnable succession of fortresses. Source accessed February 22, 2021. https://bibliotheques-specialisees.paris.fr/ark:/73873/pf0000573866/1940/n580/v0001.simple.selectedTab=record.

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[37] "The Maginot Line: Shield of France," *Life*, January 3, 1938, accessed February 22, 2021. https://books.google.at/books?id=jkoEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

However, the real designs of Maginot Line fortifications actually had an impact on the fortification construction programmes of other countries, for instance on the planning and realisation of the Czechoslovak border fortifications. France had used extended planning phases and had spent a considerable amount of resources on the creation of prototypical bunker designs and a bunker typology which in return had an exemplary as well as an iconic effect (Figure 5). In this way, bunker architecture and technology contributed to the image of France as a superior nation.

Figure 5: French bunker design, Maginot Line, Ouvrage du Hackenberg. Photograph by the author.

On the other site of the border, Germany was eager to gain a more accurate picture of France's defences in order to develop scenarios for a potential military conflict. In Germany, the construction of border fortifications was designated to support the enforcement of the imperialist politics of the Nazi party which had gained power in 1933. In the one and a half years leading up to the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, the German regime forced the extensive fortification of the western border in order to ensure its military safeguarding from the Western powers while pursuing an aggressive territorial expansion policy in the east. The so-called *Westwall* was basically conceived in connection with the implementation of a nationalist colonization policy. At the same time, its construction obstructed other aspects of the nation building process such as the provision of housing or the construction of the

autobahn by draining the rest of the Reich of resources.[38] The allocation of labour force became a subject to the regime's control[39] while the vast construction sites of the *Westwall* affected the everyday life of the local population.[40] The regime orchestrated a massive propaganda campaign in regard to the construction and military use of the *Westwall.* The campaign pursued a number of objectives in terms of the national integration process: Firstly, the idealisation of the construction of the national defences as an act of will of the German people unified in National Socialism regardless of the hardships for workers and population. Secondly, the moral rearmament of the German people concerning their ability to put up a fight if demanded. The *Westwall* was continuously traded under the name of a gigantic peace project which sole purpose was the security of the German nation. This security included – as the propaganda began to suggest more openly – the defence of the German Reich from the Western powers while Germany would pursue its national goals in the east with force if necessary. The *Westwall* propaganda pictured the fortification system as an invincible defensive zone that separates the front from the homeland, thus built to exclude from the outset the traumas of the First World War – war on two fronts and territorial vulnerability.[41] The imagery was not only directed at the population of the German Reich, but used to achieve a deterrence effect against potential outer enemies. A recurring motif in images and illustrations were the long lines of anti-tank installations which was used to create a bulwark imagery and a public perception of the *Westwall* as a continuous impregnable line (Figure 6). Thirdly, the *Westwall* propaganda served the dissemination of theses of völkisch politics, stressing alleged differences between nations, and the creation of an atmosphere of nationalist ideological polarisation. At first, the French Maginot Line had also set an example for German fortification designs. Later, as the relation between the two countries deteriorated and the war broke out, the German propaganda was eager to highlight differences between the German and French fortification architecture and characteristics of the defence systems with the intention to distinguish between the character of the two nations itself, between a Germanic and Romance nature and between National Socialist and democratic conditions.[42]

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[38] Christoph Tempel, "Kurze Beschreibung der Geschichte des Westwallbaus in den Jahren 1938-1945," in *Wir bauen des Reiches Sicherheit. Mythos und Realität des Westwalls 1938 bis 1945*, ed. Eckhard Gruber (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1992), 28.

[39] John D. Heyl, "The Construction of the Westwall, 1938: An Example of National Socialist Policymaking," *Central European History* 14, no. 1 (1981): 72-73.

[40] Frank Möller, "Die Enthistorisierung des Westwalls," in *Zukunftsprojekt Westwall*, ed. Karola Fings and Frank Möller (Weilerswist: Verlag Landpresse, 2008), 24-25.

[41] Eckhard Gruber, "»Mystisch, barbarisch, gelangweilt.« - Die Propaganda um den Westwall in den Jahren 1938-1945," in *Wir bauen des Reiches Sicherheit. Mythos und Realität des Westwalls 1938 bis 1945*, ed. Eckhard Gruber (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1992), 44-46.

[42] Ibid., 46-49.

Figure 6: Cover of a German propagandistic writing. The image contains several aspects of Westwall propaganda: The collective effort of the German workers, the impression of a continuously constructed bulwark, and the purpose of the Westwall in securing the German homeland all along the western borders. In the diagram next to the photograph, the Westwall thereby appears as deep defence zone and the French defences as vestigial points and lines. Collection Frank Möller. Courtesy of Belser Verlag.

As reflected by images, reports and propagandistic writings, the fortification construction programmes of France and Germany present an example of how the idealisation of fortifications and elements of military architecture played a role in the emergence of national self-awareness. The two neighbouring states were embroiled in a propagandistic match in which fortifications not only served the interests of border security, but the ideological competition between the two nations while France invoked fortifications as technological marvels and Germany as triumph of the national political system. Thereby, it was not only the national propaganda that contributed to this process, but also the perception of the international media (which again was influenced by national propaganda). Fortifications gained their symbolic power based on the fact that they were an architecture of the state. The

construction programmes were commissioned, organised and controlled by the state for the benefit (the security) of the state or the enforcement of governmental objectives. The state used a considerable amount of financial resources at its disposal for the construction of fortifications. The realisation of fortifications was based on the deployment of the labour power of the people of the state. They were also addressed by the propaganda which used fortifications as a concept of the self-representation of the state within nationalisation processes. The type of state leadership and the system of government directly affected the implementation of the construction programmes, their extend of impact on the population, and their ideological exploitation. Furthermore, fortifications did not only play a role in the representation of the own but also of an opposite nation, a phenomenon that intensified with international crises and their escalation into war. For instance, already before the end of the Great War Czechs and Slovaks had paved the way for becoming a joint nation by committing to live in a common state.[43] The international post-war treaties affirmed the territorial extent of the new state of Czechoslovakia at the expense of the territorial claims of post-war Austria. As a consequence, in the south- and north-west of the country the new Czechoslovakian fortification system embraced border regions (the Sudetenland) with a large German-speaking population now located within a Slavic dominated state. In the course of the forced expansionist politics of Nazi Germany in 1938, which demanded the integration of the Sudetenland into the German Reich and which led to the mobilisation of the Czechoslovakian army in return, the photographic documentation of bunkers at the moment of the mobilisation served the illustration of a confident Czechoslovakian nation state that is prepared to defend itself.[44] After the Munich Agreement of September 30, 1938, Czechoslovakia had to cede the Sudetenland to Germany, thereby also losing its border defences in the west. Now accessible to the German propaganda, the Czechoslovakian fortifications were presented as means used to cement an illegitimate territorial status quo and to suppress the German population in the Sudetenland by cutting them off from the Reich. In this context, the depiction of Czechoslovakian bunkers (e.g. on German propaganda postcards) served the abasement of the Czechoslovakian state and especially of the Czechs as national group.

It is important to indicate that not every state that built fortifications before and at the beginning of the Second World War openly assigned propagandistic roles to them but was instead eager to hide their construction from the public. For instance, fascist Italy had begun to fortify its frontier in the Alps in 1931, first towards France, later also towards Yugoslavia and the German Reich (which comprised the former Republic of Austria since May 1938). The Italian border separated the majoritarian German-speaking South Tirol, which had fallen to the victorious power Italy in 1919, from Austria, as well as areas, which stretch along the Adriatic coast as far as Rijeka and are mainly inhabited by Slavs, from Yugoslavia. For Italy, the

[43]   Cf. Egbert Jahn, "Die wundersame Vermehrung der National-staaten im Zeitalter der Globalisierung," *Frankfurter Montags-Vorlesungen. Politische Streitfragen in zeitgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, Folge 27 (April 2014): 17.

[44]   Cf. Jaroslav Beneš and Jiří Suchánek, *Mobilizace ve fotografii. Armáda a stráž obrany státu v letech 1938-1939* (Brno: Extra Publishing, 2018).

fortifications served foremost the safeguarding of its territorial claims and – with focus on South Tirol – also opposite Germany and its Pan-German expansionist politics. This situation became especially delicate as Germany and Italy signed a treaty of alliance in May 1939, which was not designed to eliminate trust issues between the two allies. For this reason, Italy continued to fortify its frontier in secrecy also towards its ally. This exemplifies a return to the fundamental function of border fortifications: The establishment or maintenance of a territorial demarcation line by military means (Figure 7).

Figure 7: A section of bunkers of the so-called Alpine Wall integrated into a rock formation along the Italian border in the Alps. Courtesy of Heimo Prünster.

Borders are part of the definition of a state as 'a territorially-bounded political unit.'[45] Administration and bureaucracy, since the 19th century 'able to cover the whole territory of a state' including its periphery at the border areas[46] constitute another pillar in the development of nation states. Bureaucracy serves the nationalisation of a state, for example through the determination of a sole administrative language by a national-cultural elite, thereby

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[45]   Longo, *Politics of Borders*, 91.
[46]   Ibid., 3.

contributing at the same time to the marginalisation of ethnic minorities within the state territory. In the 1930s and the 1940s, the distribution of fortifications corresponded very much with the linearity of borders delimiting the territorial extend of a state and therefore its administrative space. The drawing of borders after the First World War meant that different ethnic groups and a number of minority ethnic communities remained within the administrative reach of individual states. These 'declared' or 'limited' nation states were eager to initially stabilise and secure their borders in order to then pursue nationalisation processes (e.g. through administrative measurements, oppression or also expulsion) within their territorial limits. One can say that the militarisation of borders in the interwar period was less an expression of the instability of the European state order than of the intricacy of national boundaries through this state order. In this order, the primacy of the territory still prevailed which was superordinate to the concept of nation. Fortifications created a military space (that is not only defined by the line of bunkers but also by the fields of fire, restricted zones and the network of barracks and other military facilities) for the defence of the territory of a state and therefore for the extend of its authority which includes the implementation of acts of nationalisation.

The role of fortification architecture in nationalisation processes

The notion of the modern nation state is situated in a field of forces formed, on the one hand, by the ethnicity of a people and, on the one hand, by their affiliation to a state with its own territory. In the history of nation states, however, these two aspects probably have never found a complete structural correspondence. It is within this field of forces where fortification architecture emanates its power and is involved in nationalisation processes. Fortification architecture has a specific purpose; its designs, layouts and incorporation of technologies should enable the survival under the conditions of war or the performance of actions of warfare based on sheltered spaces. Fortification architecture contributes to the protection and defence of a state territory. Adding the idea of nation to the idea of a territorial defined state led to the involvement of fortification architecture into national-integrative actions. Firstly, fortification architecture continued to contribute to the protection of the territory of a state, but which, besides being an administrative unit, had become a nationalising state which also imposes nationalist strains on a local population within its territory. Secondly, nationalisation as process incorporates various institutions of the state such as the military, which again is concerned with its own systemic operations of defending the own or potentially gaining the enemy's state territory. Nationalisation does not affect the military function of fortification architecture but assigns new roles to it. Especially in the period before the First World War are these roles ambiguous. This brings us, thirdly, to the point that the presence of fortifications and their militarising effects could interfere with other – civic – aspects of the nationalisation process. Fourthly, in a further role, fortification architecture is assigned to co-establish a notion of nation by contributing to the symbolic manifestation of an united and able-bodied national collective. Fifthly, with the augmentation of its symbolic function, fortification architecture increasingly served the ideological competition between nationalising states and not only the

protection of a state's territory. In this way, fortification architecture got involved in international contests in which it was presented as a national achievement and propagandistically exploited.

As effect of the symbolic function of fortifications, their real military value, in the sense of being able to maintain the function as defence system, got increasingly obscured. Even before the outbreak of the Second World War, the military value of fortifications was considered low, which was eventually confirmed by the events of the war, although fortifications were still able to maintain their propagandistic purpose. After the war, fortifications practically lost their purpose as long-range bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the atom bomb extended the military space into the global and total realm forcing the European nation states to recognise the uselessness of border fortifications. There have been exceptions in some places, but for most parts the idea of border fortifications as military means of territorial defence has been abandoned.[47] The consequence has been the deterioration of the 'long network,'[48] comprising territorial demarcated states, fortification architecture, nationalisation processes, and nation-state propaganda, which was caused by the discontinuation of the military usefulness of fortifications in regard of changed conditions. Even the nationalist propaganda value of fortifications as state architecture cannot be maintained without some military reference and the absence of a nationally achievable defence effort. Although we currently witness a (re-)fortification of borders in Europe and other parts of the world as part of political programs of 'reclaiming national sovereignty,' external factors (transnational migration) and means of border control (fencing and surveillance) are different and would require a separate consideration.[49] However, this analysis of the history of fortification architecture between 1871 and 1945 has traced, on the one hand, a particular set of interrelations caused by nationalisation as a modern condition. In this network, fortification architecture never lost its individuality as a distinct category of architecture. As such, fortification architecture got involved in nationalisation processes while it was able to contribute to these processes through its military function, which, in further consequence, co-constituted its value as national symbolic function. On the other hand, it has revealed interdependencies being crucial for the network. The category of fortification architecture, and with it its formal and structural manifestations, only exists in dependence of its potential to resist and withstand under actual conditions of war. The conception and existence of distinct categories or types of architecture has a strong dependence on external factors while changing

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[47] A view existing fortifications were modernised and integrated into defence strategies (e.g. of the NATO) against conventional forces and ultimately abandoned after the end of the Cold War. Austria, for instance, built some new bunkers for national defence purposes on its southern and eastern borders. Yugoslavia also initiated a military building programme, and Albania's dictator Enver Hoxha had bunkers built throughout the country in an excessive manner to cement his policy of national isolation. More significant was the construction of bunkers in many countries to protect civilian, technical and political infrastructures from nuclear strikes or, again, to house nuclear arms, but this was done covertly and thus without a publicly effective national integrative potential.

[48] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), 201.

[49] Cf. Said Saddiki, *World of Walls. The Structure, Roles and Effectiveness of Separation Barriers* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017).

conditions can lead to the discontinuation of their existence as architectures of a particular purpose. Regarding its interdependencies as symbolic architecture, without military purpose fortification architecture (as it was devised and implemented between 1871 and 1945) was also not able to continue to contribute to nationalisation processes in a representational form.

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