



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Helmut Kohl once expressed one of the fundamental principles of his European policy as follows: “The small countries in the European Union deserve as much respect as the large ones. The significance of a Member State cannot be measured by the size of its population or the square kilometers it occupies.” While Kohl was concerned with Europe, of course the principle applies beyond its borders. Although other countries tend to be in the limelight of international politics, the significance of the so-called small states should not be underestimated.

However, the ability to exert influence in international politics despite lacking in size requires a sophisticated strategy, as Anna-Lena Kirch explains in her article on the central topic of this issue, using Finland as an example. Extraordinarily sparsely populated with just over five million inhabitants and therefore a “small” state in this regard, Finland pursues a systematic foreign policy course of cooperation with its Nordic neighbours and involvement in international organisations. With this approach, the country tries to safeguard its security and maximise its influence despite its limited political, military and human resources. Against the backdrop of a Russian expansionist agenda and constrained public finances, the government in Helsinki is prepared to pursue this strategy with even greater purpose in future and even depart – at least rhetorically – from the principle of military non-alignment, which the country had adhered to for decades.

In his article on Mongolia’s foreign policy, Daniel Schmücking illustrates how difficult it can be for the so-called small states to hold their own amongst the large states. Sandwiched between the “giants” Russia and China, the country’s so-called third neighbor policy symbolises its endeavour to free itself at least to some extent from the oppressive embrace of its two overpowering neighbours and to diversify its political and economic foreign relations. Europe should continue to support Mongolia in these efforts, because we can benefit from a closer partnership with the young democracy not only in the competition for raw materials but also

where the embedding of democratic values in Asia is concerned and, not least, with respect to security matters.

The Vatican, or more precisely the Holy See, which is the actual subject of international law, represents a special case among the small states in many respects. With a land area of just 0.44 square kilometers and a population of some 840, it is by far the smallest of the small states but derives an incomparable amount of influence from the fact that it represents over a billion Catholics the world over. In their article, Christian Rieck and Dorothee Niebuhr therefore refer to the Vatican as a “cultural superpower” and illustrate how the Pope, representing the Roman Catholic Church, has repeatedly succeeded in exerting influence in the foreign policy arena.

If there is one thing that unites all three articles on the central topic of this issue, it is the realisation that size alone is not necessarily the decisive factor. With a sophisticated strategy, small states can exert significant influence. And that is why – as Helmut Kohl rightly stated – one should never underestimate the so-called small states.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers," with a stylized flourish at the end.

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