

Editorial

Dear Readers,

As Europe became more unified, Germany made strides in overcoming the country's division and the processes of globalisation became all-pervasive, the last few decades have been characterised by increasingly disappearing boundaries. This development now seems to have stalled. The major migration movements of the last few years, the annexation of Crimea in contravention of international law, the Brexit vote, the proliferation of isolationist voices within and outside Europe – however different these phenomena may be in principle, they have one thing in common: they illustrate that borders and boundaries still have considerable significance.

In reference to the international system, policies of setting or reinforcing boundaries would have devastating consequences, particularly in economic terms, as David Gregosz interjects in this issue. He believes that Germany, in its role of one of the world's leading trading nations, has a responsibility to use its current presidency of the G20 to promote free global markets and encourage efforts to actively shape the globalisation process.

The wall U.S. President Trump plans to build along the border to Mexico acts as a potent symbol. However, as Victoria Rietig and Christian Bilfinger conclude in their article, strengthening border protection will definitely not be sufficient by itself to resolve the problem of illegal migration from Mexico and Central America. They believe it will take additional investment in Latin America, particularly aimed at addressing the causes of economic and refugee migration, in order to overcome the problem.

Securing its external borders is also a topic that is receiving greater attention in the European Union once again. It represents a prerequisite for being able to guarantee free movement and security in the Schengen Area even in times of mass migration and new potential threats. The latest challenges at the external EU borders have clearly illustrated the need to reform existing instruments, as Angelos Athanasopoulos explains in his article.

On the African continent, managing the internal borders plays an important role, as Kwesi Aning and John Pokoo explain in their article. The purpose of efficient border management is to reduce the conflict potential between neighbouring states and increase economic integration on the continent. This is all the more

important in Africa as border disputes have resulted in a large number of violent conflicts in the past.

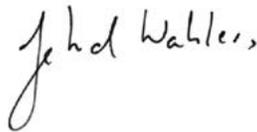
In their article, Gabriele Baumann and Moritz Junginger demonstrate how borders can (yet again!) cause bloody conflicts in Europe as well. The principle of the inviolability of borders in Europe has been violated not just once but twice in the case of Ukraine: by Russia's annexation of Crimea and by the occupation of parts of the Donbas by pro-Russian separatists. Besides questions of foreign policy and geopolitics, which are usually at the center of attention in this context, the authors examine the everyday reality of the people living near the newly created "borders" – having to live their lives in the shadow of the ever-present danger of the conflict escalating.

There is also a potential for escalation in the foreseeable future in the dispute over sovereignty rights in the South China Sea, as David Arase explains in his article. The conflict illustrates that maritime boundaries are not fought over with less tenacity, particularly when there are rich fishing grounds, natural resources as well as geo-economic and geo-strategic interests at stake. In this case, China, intent on demonstrating its power, is facing a determination to guarantee freedom of navigation in the South China Sea for the future.

In conclusion, Frank Sauer considers two spaces that only appear to have no boundaries: outer space and cyberspace. He explains that here, too, there is and has to be deliberation over boundaries. After all, the following principle applies not only in outer space and cyberspace: however desirable the elimination of boundaries may be in many areas, in others they fulfil indispensable functions, be it in connection with averting danger, ensuring political and social order, or establishing useful identities.

I wish you a stimulating read.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers is Editor of International Reports, Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department European and International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (gerhard.wahlers@kas.de).