



books & publications

Gerald Knaus: **Welche Grenzen brauchen wir? Zwischen Empathie und Angst – Flucht, Migration und die Zukunft von Asyl**

Piper Verlag, München, 2020,

ISBN 978-3-492-05988-6, 336 pages, € 18.-

www.grenzen.eu



(Ed/Hartmut Bühl, Paris) The dream of a world without physical borders will remain an illusion. Exploring the future of borders requires finding answers to two questions:

1. Should borders be open in order to facilitate trade and allow neighbours to live together in harmony? Should they be closely supervised to ward off threats like invasions or criminal activities? Should they be strictly policed so as to prevent uncontrolled flows of people?
2. Can they be declared obsolete by a group of countries sharing a similar outlook (Schengen) or should they, on the contrary, be closed for reasons of national sovereignty?

In his book *Welche Grenzen brauchen wir? Zwischen Empathie und Angst – Flucht, Migration und die Zukunft von Asyl* (“Which borders do we need? Between empathy and fear – flight, migration and the future of asylum”) Gerald Knaus explores various solutions to these fundamental problems, which, he believes, are obscured by overly ideological debates and contradictory human emotions. If it were possible to devise politically acceptable solutions focusing primarily on people, it could become possible in the 21st century to consider only the objective facts. And although this would not lead to a world without borders, it could create the kinds of

borders that Knaus, an expert on migration and founder and Chief Executive of the European Stability Initiative (ESI) in Berlin, describes as the “humane borders”. Understandably, the author bases his analysis of the problems of flight, asylum and migration on the post 1945 migration dramas and makes a plea for the non-pushback of those seeking protection. Knaus’ proposals to solve the endless drama of migrants fleeing across the Aegean sea culminated in the Merkel plan of 2015 and the EU-Turkey statement of 2016.

Gerald Knaus, who is an expert on areas of crisis like the Balkans, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa, and who has also lived there for some time, proves in his rich and well documented book, that Europe has every possibility of devising a border regime for its external border that combines supervision with humanity. It is Europe’s duty, he considers, to develop a model that other regions can follow.

In his fascinating and commendable book, praised by the German media, the author combines his own personal story with the essence of his subject. He weaves a skilful narrative around the Swiss border regime from 1938 until after the second world war and describes how the commitment of one man, Paul Grüninger, the Head of the Cantonal Police in Saint Gallen, introduced a measure of humanity into the Swiss border regime and was thereby able to save lives.

Considering this example in the light of today’s situation, he concludes that Europe needs a robust asylum procedure that can be effectively implemented by national asylum authorities for the benefit of the people most directly concerned.

Conclusion: Gerald Knaus’ book is both a thought-provoking and worthwhile input to the current, often confused, debate on migration and asylum, that it helps push in the right direction.



Gerald Knaus (right) presenting his book to Martin Schulz MdB, former President of the European Parliament, Berlin, November 2020

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→ see also the **interview with Gerald Knaus and Minister Jean Asselborn, pp 22-25**