

The presented dissertation seeks to answer why states construct barriers on their borders. In order to provide an answer, a new theoretical approach is proposed based on re-reading the works of Carl Schmitt. The offered theory builds upon existing scholarship and is centred around the concept of *nomos*, defined as a political order consisting of a performative way of life and land division that is underlying the political existence of states. The basic argument advanced here is that border barriers are constructed against hard-to-identify strangers to this order. Seven case studies are offered where the process of barrier construction is tracked back-to-back with various developments pertaining to the identified *nomos*. The results confirm the existence of hard-to-identify strangers challenging the respective *nomos* in different ways and their role in the process leading to the barrier construction. For the study of border barriers, this implies the importance of the issue of strangeness and identification in predicting barrier construction. The work also demonstrates *nomos*' potential usefulness as an analytic prism for geopolitical research.