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For the First Time from this Editor

With issue 2/2018, I have taken over from Andreas Mehler and Henning Melber as *Africa Spectrum's* new editor-in-chief. It is both a great honour and a great responsibility to follow in their impressive footsteps, and I am extremely grateful for the support I have received from them during the transition period. Ever since I was first introduced to the journal about 10 years ago, I have been impressed by Andreas's and Henning's dedicated work, which has contributed decisively to *Africa Spectrum's* reputation as an internationally respected area studies journal.

I am deeply committed to preserving and further strengthening the journal's unique characteristics. Two features stand out in this regard: First, *Africa Spectrum* is fully open access. Beyond the fact that this is a "timely thing to do," unobstructed access is indispensable to (further) democratising knowledge production on sub-Saharan Africa. Second, the journal is multidisciplinary. In an academic world where disciplinary boundaries often shape our thinking and writing (as well as many careers), it remains a challenging, yet very rewarding undertaking to bridge these divides. We are grateful to all the scholars who are willing to support this endeavour by publishing and reviewing "outside the box." Because I have sought to bridge the gap between area studies, comparative politics, and peace research in my own research on international sanctions and authoritarian politics (with a particular focus on Burundi and Zimbabwe), I am very sympathetic to such an approach. I am a Senior Research Fellow at the GIGA Institute of African Affairs and spokesperson for the Research Team "Interventions and Security."

The last months have been characterised by continuity and change. Two members of the editorial team have decided to end their affiliation with the journal as they embark on new professional journeys. I would like to thank Jason Sumich and Kati Krähnert for their commitment, and I wish them all the best for their future academic endeavours. Following the retirement of Ellen Baumann, Petra Brandt has become the journal's new managing editor. Her long-standing expertise has proved invaluable to facilitating the transition process, and I am looking forward to our future collaboration.

Providing space to young, especially African scholars has always been a special aim of *Africa Spectrum*, and one which was particularly important to my predecessors. I am thrilled that we have received 13 interesting submissions, which is a record number, for this year's Young African Scholar Award and that Henning will continue to contribute his long-standing expertise as a member of the jury on behalf of our cooper-

ation partner, the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (formerly the Centre for Africa Studies) at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

With debates about the nature of academic publishing making it to mainstream media, I could not imagine a more interesting time to take over as *Africa Spectrum's* new editor-in-chief. I am deeply convinced that there is a need for a journal that seeks to advance diverse, inclusive, and democratic knowledge production on sub-Saharan Africa which reaches out to a global audience. There remains a lot to be done in this respect, and I am excited to become part of this journey.

■ Julia Grauvogel