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## BOOK REVIEW: DIVIDED – WHY WE’RE LIVING IN AN AGE OF WALLS

Dagmar Nováková\*

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MARSHALL, T.: *Divided – Why we’re living in an age of walls*. London: Elliott and Thompson, 2018. 320 p. ISBN 9781783963973.

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**Tim Marshall** was Diplomatic Editor and foreign correspondent for Sky News. After thirty years’ experience in news reporting and presenting, he left full time news journalism to concentrate on writing and analysis. His previous book called *Prisoners of Geography* became a bestseller. His new book was awaited with high expectations.

He deals with 7 regions in this book – China, USA, Israel and Palestine, The Middle East, The Indian Subcontinent, Africa, Europe and UK. In each chapter, he dissects the issues and events that have led to the construction of walls in these nations – the walls that divide not just one region from another but also one nation from another.

The Chinese wall is now more a tourist attraction and remains to be a symbol of division between civilized world from barbarians. The author emphasizes the creation of a new form of the wall in China – big electronic wall meant to protect against outer information but also against social networks inside.

Chapter about the USA elaborates on the development and origins of the wall on the US south border with Mexico. Although president **D. Trump** announced his intention to build huge wall on Mexican border, there is no political will and financial sources for such project. His predecessor president **B. Obama** actually did not make many high-profile speeches, but on the other

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hand enabled to build a wall on the border. He even rescinded the document between the USA and Mexico from 1970 on free movement around the river Rio Grande. **T. Marshall** speaks also about old but now growing division in American society – racial and religious.

The wall between Israel and Palestine is not the only one around Israel. There are also walls separating Israel from Gaza, Egypt and Syria. The reason is always the same – security against attacks on civilians. Both sides have different view on existence of the wall. **T. Marshall** reveals another divisions of the society in Israel and Palestine connected with religion and economy.

Author clarifies situation on the Middle East. Hopes to achieve the unity of Arabic speaking countries is not very realistic due to religious divisions and ongoing conflicts. Contemporary building of both simple concrete wall or modern hi-tech wall between Arabic countries is apologized by security necessity against terrorist attacks, smuggling and migrants.

Chapter dealing with Arabic world shows clearly how divided this world is. Despite numerous attempts at pan-Arabism, there is schism deeply and historically rooted in the religion – division between Sunnis and Shias which still obstructs to achieve the unity. Author mentions the situation in Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and with Kurds.

Indian subcontinent is a region where also real walls around borders of the states exist. However, author mentions Rohingya people in Myanmar, tensions between Hinduism and Islam, caste system in India. All these factors put in motion mass of people and create new divisions. Even climate changes and floods in Bangladesh will create climate migrants in the future and neighbouring states are not ready to absorb them.

African continent is suffering from historical decisions, traditional tribal system and unbalance of poverty. Author deals with wall in Morocco, historical town of Benin, Angola as example or artificially created state, genocide in Rwanda, the dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria, high crime rate and newly built walls separating extremely poor quarters and enclosed residential areas within big cities.

Author reminisced his trip to Berlin and Berlin Wall as a symbol of ideological division of Europe during the Cold war. Reunification of Germany and EU enlargement in 2004 brought enthusiasm about mutual co-existence. However, model of the European Union with its idea of unity, free movement of people and elimination of borders is now confronted by waves of migrants mostly from Africa, Syria and other Asian states, unequal economic

development in “old” and “new” member states and rise of nationalism and extremism.

It is necessary to admit that **T. Marshall** remains a master storyteller with an easy and approachable language and style. The book is mixture of personal travel guide, historical events, political decisions, statistics data and prediction of the future. Author does not just look at physical walls like the Berlin and Mexican ones, he also explores social and class divisions within countries, covering more obvious cases like Israel and Palestine, to the insidious culture within the USA, and omnipresent religious division in all mentioned regions.

Author’s view in many places of the book is influenced by his attitude favouring the USA. He claims successes in areas where they really do not exist, for instance the real (not declared) unity of American nation, self-sufficiency in case of retreat from globalisation, liberal democracy as the only and the best political regime. Situation in Africa and India is the only result of colonialism and behaviour of colonial states. Analysis of contemporary factors (like promoting interests of great powers, direct or indirect interference, selected and temporary international assistance) is missing. Additionally, his explanation of Brexit only by threat of migration is insufficient.

However, we are given some really interesting insights into some volatile regions and some controversial subjects all told in an accessible and clear way that is sure to be of interest to most people with a curiosity about current global politics.