



Civil War
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(Own report) - Even before units of the German armed forces (Bundeswehr) are deployed in the Middle East, Lebanese critics are warning of a new civil war. Even a German military intervention "will not be able to neutralize" the "explosive cocktail" of western, Arab and Iranian interests, anticipates the history professor, Abdel Abdel-Raouf Sinno, in Beirut during a discussion with german-foreign-policy.com. As various scenarios are being circulated in Berlin, as to which branches of the Bundeswehr will intervene in Lebanon, Prof. Sinno refers to the ongoing French-German rivalry, that has affected the eastern Mediterranean, since German enterprises began to massively expand into the area. In the "Greater Middle East", the US project of an Arab colony for resources, inter-western contradictions are unfolding and leading to a heightened destabilization of the entire region.

As one learns in Berlin, on Thursday (Aug. 17), Secretary of Defense, Franz Josef Jung, will introduce at a conference on troop deployment in New York, the German offer for the western intervention in Lebanon. It is still considered feasible that the Bundeswehr assume intelligence and surveillance tasks. Military policy makers are pleading particularly for the deployment of warships to control Lebanese territorial waters. The German federal police could also place the Lebanese-Syrian border under surveillance, while the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) is suitable, according to some in government circles, as a substitute unit. All of these suggestions are met with criticism in Lebanon. In a discussion with german-foreign-policy.com, the Lebanese historian Abdel Raouf Sinno explains that he "does not endorse Germany's sending troops into Lebanon." Sinno is a specialist on the history of German-Lebanese relations and sees the possibility of a new civil war in the case of a western military intervention - "either because Hezbollah refuses to disarm, or because the weak Lebanese government would try to disarm it by force." [1]

Setback

According to Sinno, Berlin is again trying to strengthen its position in the Middle East by assuming the functions of mediator, and pursuing thereby its own selfish objectives. The German government wants to station its troops "in any case with the agreement of Lebanon and/or Hezbollah, Syria and Iran", observes Sinno: "Germany again seeks to appear as an intermediary." In these attempts, German foreign policy suffered a setback on Aug. 15. Shortly before the German Foreign Minister was scheduled to visit Damascus, the Syrian president made it clear that his country would not be included in the plans of mediation and insisted upon maintaining an independent position. Thereupon Foreign Minister Steinmeier had to call off his visit.

Competition

The German mediator role encounters opposition also in Paris. The bone of contention is the pretentious German claim to endeavors for bringing order to the former French colonial sphere. Paris, which had ruled over extensive areas of today's Lebanon and Syria, exercises still today substantial influence in Beirut. The fact that the German foreign minister was unsuccessful with Damascus is seen in France not without satisfaction. Since German enterprises began to expand on a large scale, to open new markets, French-German rivalry was being fought out in the eastern Mediterranean. The objective is to gain a prominent position in the geopolitical occupation and plunder of the Arab states. German foreign policy has furnished the prerequisites long before their current protective statements, of wanting to insure Israel's right to exist.

National Support

German Middle East policy had its first important upswing during the rule of Wilhelm II. Before 1871 only German churches pursued comprehensive interests at that time in Palestine and Syria. Despite some trade agreements, bilateral commerce remained weak. It was only during the economic crises of the early empire, that the search accelerated for new markets for German industrial products, and German Middle East trade was intensified. An aggravation of the inter-European rivalry was not long in coming. With the foreign

ministry supported founding of the German Palestine Bank, in 1897, financial circles sought "to offer better support at a national banking institution for German interests in the Orient." [2] Even though the bank rapidly succeeded in asserting itself vis à vis its rivals, the Banque Impériale Ottomane and the French Crédit Lyonnais, the German economic position in Syria and Palestine remained weak, despite a noticeable upswing in comparison to other European powers.

"Demolish France's Prestige"

Even gaining political influence was not sufficient for pushing aside the European competitors in Syria and Palestine. In the mid 1880s, conflicts between Berlin and Paris increased and were reflected in Syria. Since 1887, German warships occasionally visited the Syrian coast. In the 1890s, conflicts arose with France concerning the protection of German Catholics living in the Middle East. It is "of general advantage", wrote the undersecretary of state in the German foreign ministry, in June 1898, "to support everything that, on the one hand, demolishes France's prestige in the Levante and, on the other hand, that can prolong the recently inflamed animosity between German and French Catholics concerning Oriental affairs." [3] Wilhelm II's visit to the Orient, in the autumn 1898, strengthened German trade relations and led, among other things, to the construction by German enterprises of the Baghdad Railroad. One year before the outbreak of the World War I, the German press nonetheless summarized: "the fact cannot (...) be denied that in the current situation, France still maintains a superior political position in Syria and Palestine." [4]

Occupation

Despite the collapse that followed World War I, export interests during the Weimar Republic led to a renewed Middle East expansion. Following the conclusion of a trade agreement with the mandate power, Great Britain, Germany soon developed into becoming the second most important business partner for Palestine. In the eastern Mediterranean, Berlin pursued above all "aspirations to participate in the exploitation of oil resources", explained the foreign ministry in August 1940. Concerning Arab elite circles, collaborating with Nazi

Germany, it was ordered in a circular of the Ministry: "These guidelines are to be treated confidentially (...) in particular, this shall not be divulged to Arab personalities." [5] At the beginning of 1942, a memorandum written for the foreign ministry, concretized the German interests in the Middle East: "alongside the occupation of Iraq, Syria and Palestine, the objective of our advance into the Arab region will be, the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf. (...) Preparation must be made for the takeover of the oil facilities in the different regions of Arabia and Iran (Kirkuk, Khanekin, Abadan, Kuwait, Bahrain)". [6]

Chaos

The occupation of wide-ranging areas of the Middle East, planned earlier, has in the meantime either already taken place or is about to, through a coalition of former enemy industrial nations, including their German rivals. Since those involved can not reach a uniform strategy, and each seeks its own respective advantages, the entire region is on the verge of chaos, whose blueprint is the US project for a "Greater Middle East". Lebanon is but the most recent victim. "European powers, that believe they have something to win here, will lose", predicts Professor Sinno in his interview with [german-foreign-policy.com](http://www.german-foreign-policy.com).

Please read also the [Interview mit Prof. Abdel-Raouf Sinno](#).

Please read also [Kriegserklärung, Der Ermittler, Dummy Foundations, The road to Damascus](#) and [Der Vermittler](#)

[1] Please read also the [Interview mit Prof. Abdel-Raouf Sinno](#)

[2] Karl Strasser: Die deutschen Banken im Ausland, München 1925

[3] Abdel-Raouf Sinno: Deutsche Interessen in Syrien und Palästina 1841-1898; Berlin 1982

[4] Kölnische Zeitung 16.07.1913

[5] Rundschreiben des Auswärtigen Amts vom 20. August 1940, zitiert nach: Rheinisches JournalistInnenbüro (Hg.): "Unsere Opfer zählen nicht". Die Dritte Welt im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Berlin 2005

[6] Zum Kaukasus, zum Ural und weiter... Der deutsche Überfall auf die Sowjetunion am 22. Juni 1941; junge Welt 22.06.2001

<http://www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/fulltext/56018>