

Germany: Die Zeit editor advocates massive war in the Middle East

Peter Schwarz
19 September 2013

In the latest edition of *Die Zeit*, Josef Joffe advocates a massive war in the Middle East. Under the headline, “A human rights war is also war,” he outlines a scenario tantamount to a violent military conquest and decades of colonial subjugation of the entire region.

Joffe, together with former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Social Democratic Party, SPD), is the editor of *Die Zeit*, which according to an entry in Wikipedia, “targets audiences with a higher level of education, traditionally mainly academics or members of the educated classes.”

Joffe admits indirectly that the Syrian “rebels” promoted by the West are actually terrorists and criminals. “The ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are grouped in a picture-puzzle,” he writes. “Whoever is being murdered or ‘cleansed’ by one side today, takes cruel revenge when the tide of war turns.”

For this reason, Joffe proposes to base propaganda for a war against Syria exclusively on the United Nations “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine: “Only the humanitarian duty is unambiguous, the responsibility to protect. Because those bleeding in this new war are especially the defenseless.”

In the name of this “glaring moral duty,” as he calls the Responsibility to Protect elsewhere, Joffe suggests bombing the entire region to the ground. He shies away neither from civilian casualties nor a war without national or temporal limits. In this way, he takes his claim that the war is for the protection of the defenseless to absurdity.

He openly poses the question, “How inhuman can the saviour be when he is fulfilling his humanitarian duty? How far can the firefighter go in destroying the house in order to put out the fire?” And he makes clear that for him there are no limits.

“Whoever wants to bring down the Assad

dictatorship, or at least paralyze it (or tomorrow the Sisi regime in Egypt, which drowned a mass uprising in blood), must destroy the power supply, communications facilities, factories and bridges as in Serbia; better yet, refineries, gasoline storage, airfields and ports. And, with precision weapons or without, he must accept thousands of civilian deaths,” Joffe writes.

He is not satisfied with “tailored” military strikes, as officially advocated by US President Barack Obama. “Such a mini-war” would “not end the humanitarian tragedy.” The Responsibility to Protect demands “much, much more.”

In addition to a “no-fly and no-move zone in the whole country”, Joffe considers ground troops as indispensable. “But that would turn the ‘tailored’ war into a massive war with an open-ended time scale, until the regime falls or can no longer kill. But then the next war would begin, and once more in the name of humanitarian duty... Whoever engages for the sake of the people must remain ready for the next intervention. Whoever says A must recite the whole alphabet. Duty has no expiration date.”

In case anyone still does not understand him fully, Joffe repeats that the Assad regime “and its protégés, Christians, Druze and Alawites,” cannot be put off by a “shot across the bow.” “Behind the threat must be the second shot into the wheelhouse, the third in the bridge and the fourth below the water line.”

To conduct such a massive war, a huge military armament is required, which will encounter massive resistance. In this context, Joffe makes a revealing remark. After expressing his regret about the partial withdrawal of Western troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, he poses the question, “Why is the West giving up after all these years?” His answer, “Because democracies cannot withstand wars when they are not

about one's own skin."

The conclusion to draw from this answer is obvious: To wage war, you have to abolish democracy, as Germany's ruling elite did in 1933 before they plunged half the world into war. Joffe's "human rights war" requires dictatorial regimes not only in the countries conquered, but also at home.

Joffe's article is the culmination of many previous editorials in the German media—from the supposedly left-liberal *taz*, to *Die Zeit* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* to the right-wing Springer press—which all promote a war in the Middle East. They all articulate the interests of German imperialism, which, under the pressure of the global economic crisis and growing social tensions, is calling for a more aggressive, militarily backed foreign policy.

In the same issue of *Die Zeit* in which Joffe advocates a war in the Middle East, Deputy Editor Bernd Ulrich complains that German Chancellor Angela Merkel continually reacts to crises and maneuvers, instead of formulating a strategy. "Whether it is Europe, war and peace or energy supplies: From now on, a lack of strategy does not overcome crises, it creates them," concludes Ulrich.

Under the cynical banner of a "human rights war", Joffe is advocating a war of aggression, and is fully aware of its criminal aims. In 2003, he strongly supported the Iraq war, which was rejected by the German government at the time.

Later, he changed his position on the grounds that the Americans had "slaughtered the wrong pig". "When you consider the Middle East coolly from a Realpolitik perspective, then that was the wrong war at the wrong time against the wrong guy," he wrote in October 2006 to the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation. "For the real threat to US interests in the region was not Saddam Hussein." The real threat to US interests was, "from a very cool, Realpolitik point of view," Iran.

"A very cool, Realpolitik point of view" is now again the reason for the war against Syria. It is about hegemony in the energy-rich and strategically important Middle East. The target is not only Syria, but also Iran and, in the long term, Russia. A member of numerous international political and academic institutions and editorial boards, Joffe enjoys close relationships with the leading circles in Germany, the US and Israel, and as a result he is well aware of these

reasons.

His aggressive war propaganda not only violates the reticence officially practiced for a long time in Germany because of the war crimes of the Nazi regime. It also violates international law and the German constitution and Penal Code, which prescribe heavy penalties for the conduct of a war of aggression.

In the Nuremberg trials, the leaders of the Nazi regime were convicted because they had carried out and promoted a war of aggression. One of the main charges was committing crimes against peace.

This was then reflected in the post-war German Constitution. Article 26 reads: "Acts tending to and undertaken with intent to disturb the peaceful relations between nations, especially to prepare for a war of aggression, are unconstitutional. They shall be made a criminal offense."

The accompanying paragraph 80 of the Criminal Code prescribes life imprisonment or a term of imprisonment of not less than ten years for causing a war of aggression with the participation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Since, according to general legal opinion, incitement to commit a crime is punishable, Joffe's war propaganda is certainly a criminal offense. However, he need not fear being prosecuted by the judiciary. The German justice system has never taken up a case under Article 26.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact