

# German politicians and media push for war with Damascus

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In the aftermath of the alleged gas attack in the Syrian province of Idlib, German politicians and media outlets have switched to war mode. Although the circumstances remain entirely unclear and everything points to an imperialist provocation, the German government and other European powers are advocating the overthrow of the Assad regime and a confrontation with Russia.

On the sidelines of the Syrian donor summit in Brussels on Wednesday, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel described the gas attack in Syria as a “barbaric war crime” and demanded retaliation. “Those responsible for this barbarism in the Assad regime must be held accountable. And there can be no alignment with the Assad regime—even in the struggle against the terrorists of the so-called ‘Islamic State’,” he said. “As an ally of the Assad regime,” Russia bore “particular responsibility.”

Gabriel left no doubt that the chief goal of the imperialist powers in Syria is the overthrow of Assad. The struggle against Islamic State was “important,” but it could “not be permitted to push the fight against the crimes of the civil war in Syria, torture, poison gas attacks, into the background.” The “political process for a new constitution, free elections and a democratic end to the Assad regime” was “the precondition for permanent peace in the region.”

It is a cynical lie for the German government to claim that it is interested in “democracy,” “peace” and “human rights” in the Middle East. It was made public over recent days that the German military supplied the coordinates for a massacre in Syria that killed at least 33, including women and children.

Unlike the war in Libya in 2011, Germany has been one of the warring parties from the outset in Syria, seeking to enforce its economic and geostrategic

interests in the Middle East. Already in 2012, the Foreign Ministry, in conjunction with the German Institute for Foreign Affairs (SWP) and sections of the Syrian opposition, began the project “The Day After” and drafted a “vision for a post-Assad order.” Then at the end of 2015, the German army intervened directly into the conflict with Tornado fighter jets, a warship and 1,200 soldiers.

The German government is now seeking to utilise the gas attack to strengthen its position in the US-led coalition. Their main concern in this is not the well-being of Syria, but rather that the United States under President Trump sticks to the goal of overthrowing Assad and ensures Germany a share of the spoils in the plundering of Syria.

“The brutal, inhumane gas attack cannot pass without consequences,” SPD parliamentary group leader Thomas Oppermann told *Der Spiegel*. However, “the threats from President Trump that the US will go it alone” would not help the situation. Notwithstanding Trump’s verbal about-face with regard to Assad, his Syria policy remains “very contradictory” and “this political back and forth” makes it more difficult to reach “a consensus in the international community to resolve the conflict,” Oppermann added.

The Green Party spoke in similar terms. Green parliamentary deputy Franziska Brantner called on the US president in an interview to end his “zigzag course” towards Assad and to take a clear stance against him. “I think the conflicts are simply too grave for us to carry on listening to such manoeuvring. The Europeans must demand a clear statement.”

By a “clear statement” Brantner means a major military intervention. “The question is, how long do we want to look on? There is actually a UN Security Council resolution from 2015 which unambiguously

states that if another poison gas attack takes place, measures under Chapter VII will be adopted. These are the harshest measures the United Nations has.” To reach the desperate people, “air bridges” would have to be established and secured militarily, she continued.

Brantner’s proposal aims “unambiguously” to bring about regime change in Damascus. In March 2011, the establishment of a no-fly zone in Libya under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which was also justified with “humanitarian” arguments, was the pretext for a massive NATO air war against the oil-rich country, which reached a brutal high point with the murder of Muammar Gaddafi by Western-backed Islamist rebels.

In Syria, the establishment of “air bridges” and the intervention of the military in accordance with Chapter VII would result in a direct confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia and Iran, Assad’s main allies.

Despite this, Gregor Gysi, the chairman of the European Left in the European Parliament, called for a more aggressive intervention, regardless of who was responsible “for the spreading of poison gas in Syria.” He added, “Either it was a gas attack, then at some point those responsible have to be held accountable for war crimes. Or a poison gas factory was bombed in which other troops, not Syrian government troops, were producing gas.” The Left Party politician continued, “They should also be sharply criticised and held to account.”

With Russia’s intervention in Syria having cut across the German government’s plans and driven the Islamist militias to the brink of defeat, the German media is also waging an ever more hysterical campaign for military action against Damascus.

Hubert Wetzel, who in 2013 called for the firing of a “salvo of cruise missiles at Bashar al-Assad’s army headquarters,” wrote in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on Thursday in a piece entitled “Now it’s Trump’s war,” “A truth does not become a lie just because the liar Donald Trump said it. That’s why: Trump is right. The Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad continues to murder his own population and can still gas women and children to death because of the ‘weakness and indecisiveness’ of Barack Obama, as Trump said of the former president.”

Then he added, “A president used to govern in Washington who drew red lines in the sky but never defended them. Today, a president governs in Washington who up to now thought Assad was a nice

guy and Russia—a warring party in Syria—a partner for peace; who has not drawn any red lines, but who thinks many lines that he never drew have been crossed. Assad need not worry for now.”

Berthold Kohler, the co-editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, raged, “All eyes are also turned towards the Kremlin, because without the Russian attack to benefit the butcher Assad, his regime would no longer exist. It seems to have finally been understood in Washington that Russia did not simply intervene in the Syrian civil war out of neighbourly love.” However, the United States, like Europe, “still doesn’t have a plan to prevent Assad from gassing his people.”



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