

# War fever grips German media

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“Anyone who, at a meeting or through the distribution of writings, incites the crime of aggression will be punished with a custodial sentence of between three months and five years,” states paragraph 80A of Germany’s Criminal Code. The “crime of aggression”—i.e., the conducting of a war of aggression or any other act of aggression—is punishable by life imprisonment according to paragraph 13 of Germany’s International Criminal Code.

These paragraphs trace their origins directly to the Nuremberg Trials against the Nazis. If they were taken seriously, numerous German politicians and newspaper editors would be behind bars.

The preparation of a military strike against Syria has unleashed war fever among Germany’s political parties and newspapers.

*Die Welt*, the flagship publication of the right-wing Springer publishing house, is demanding the “eradication of the Assad regime with a military engagement” and the deployment of “hundreds of thousands of soldiers” to Syria to “in the worst case scenario, fight Russians and Iranians.”

This language recalls not only the language of Hitler and Goebbels, who also described their war aims with vocabulary like “eradicate” and “exterminate.” It is also comparable with Hitler’s mad, criminal plans in terms of content. Hundreds of thousands of American and European troops fighting “against Russians and Iranians” would inevitably lead to a nuclear war that humanity would be highly unlikely to survive.

The statements appear in a comment published by *Die Welt* on Thursday from Jacques Schuster. Under the headline, “A war can’t begin with a mere symbolic strike,” the chief commentator for the Welt Group declares, “Assad must go!”

Schuster writes that there can be no objections to a military strike. The lesson of history is not “war, never again!”, but “aggression, never again!” There are times

when precisely such aggression “has to be answered with force—whether from Trump or Macron.”

The lies and demagoguery are breathtaking. *Die Welt* is justifying a war that would claim the lives of tens of thousands, if not millions, with an alleged gas attack in Syria, which has not been substantiated and bears all the hallmarks of a provocation. The orchestrated Racak massacre was used in a similar way to launch the war in Yugoslavia, and an alleged imminent massacre in Benghazi served to legitimise the destruction of Libya.

Schuster even manages to attack Trump from the right. He describes the US president “intellectually speaking” as “half-hearted,” and doubts whether he has “the will and ability” to conduct such a war. “The cool sobriety, the geostrategic understanding, the ability to think things through at least halfway to the end—he doesn’t have any of that.” A war can “not begin with such an obviously helpless symbolic strike, which will impress neither the Russians nor Assad. It should also not arise from the need to return to the world stage, as with France, the puffed-up military dwarf.”

“War with Assad,” according to Schuster, “should be conducted with one goal and question: Can the Assad regime be eradicated with one military engagement. Are the Americans and Europeans ready to deploy hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the country for this purpose and to fight Russians and Iranians if necessary?” By contrast, an air attack alone will “produce nothing.” It can “calm excited Western minds,” but the risk is not worth it.

Other commentators are advancing an equally provocative line.

Carsten Luther declares in *Die Zeit*, “The use of chemical weapons in Syria cannot be allowed to pass without consequences.” He praises US President Trump, who “entirely correctly maintained” that “whoever does such a thing must pay a ‘high price’ so that they don’t do so again.” Force is a “last resort. But

you can't do without force all the time."

The editor for *Die Zeit* cynically attacks "naive pacifism" and "spiritual nationalism," which always brandishes its favorite principle of international law: "don't intervene... To make this worldview fit," they then "add a quick denunciation of US imperialism."

Like *Die Welt*, *Die Zeit* considers air strikes to be inadequate. The fear is, according to Luther, that this will not be "the beginning of a more robust strategy from the West for this war," but "merely the replacement for one." The demand for an intervention by the international community is "not fulfilled with a one-off, negligible intervention."

Luther asserted that this is "not an argument for a larger military operation which takes on the regime on all fronts and sets the goal of overthrowing Assad," because this would also mean "war with Russia and Iran," which would be "madness with incalculable consequences." But this is obviously what is being discussed in the well-connected circles of government representatives and journalists in Berlin who determine government policy.

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) even manages to outdo the provocations in *Die Welt*. Newspaper editor Berthold Kohler accused Assad on Thursday of capturing one city after another "with support from the Kremlin" by "laying waste to them or turning them into gas chambers."

As if the Syrian government's actions during a civil war, which has seen the Western-backed, financed and armed rebels brutally attack the population, is comparable with the industrial killing by the Nazis. The same newspaper defended the Berlin-based historian Jörg Baberowski against criticism of his statement, "Hitler was not vicious," and his downplaying of the Nazi regime's crimes.

The FAZ also praises President Trump. "Despite his incredible boasting, his willingness to act is finding support from important allies," writes Kohler, "because there are reasons of morality and realpolitik to attack Assad."

Kohler knows full well that a war on Syria would be illegal under international law, but he still praises the German government for supporting the war, writing, "Berlin wants to politically back the Americans, French and British, even though a strike against Assad would not be legal under international law."

The Green Party-aligned TAZ also lent its support to the war drive. "Severe violations of human rights in the Syrian civil war should of course be punished," commented Beate Seel on Thursday. Like *Die Zeit* and FAZ, she criticised the absence of "a strategy for the period thereafter." However, she cloaked this call for a war strategy in typical TAZ language about a peace process overseen by the UN.

In the end she made clear that what is at stake is the securing of imperialist control over the resource-rich and strategically important Middle East. "It would be a grave mistake," she wrote, "to leave the political terrain to the Astana group [Russia, Turkey and Iran], to determine Syria's future."



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