

INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

For more than one hundred years now, the conflict in the Middle East has been *the* ongoing conflict, and the Middle East *the* crisis region *per se*, with Germany almost always right in the middle. Germany's involvement in the Middle East began with Kaiser Wilhelm II and his support of the Zionist Theodor Herzl's establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine – an idea Sultan Abdul Hamid II opposed, Palestine being part of the Ottoman Empire. The sultan's position, however, did not affect the good relations between the Ottoman Empire and the German Empire. When the First World War broke out, Kaiser Wilhelm spoke of *jihad* – holy war – against the English, and the Middle East became a major battleground where Germany, as an ally of the Ottoman Empire, played a crucial role. Earlier, in 1898, the Kaiser had declared himself protector of 300 million Muslims. Now, however, he became in fact the protector of the Jews in Palestine, defending them from the Turks yet saying nothing against the Armenian genocide. At the end of 1917, the British assured the Zionists that they would support the establishment of a 'national home' – a state for the Jews in Palestine.

In the first few years after the First World War, Germany's role in the Middle East was minor, but that changed when Hitler rose to power in 1933. In their hatred for the Jews, the Arabs – especially Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem – admired Hitler and forbore to conclude that Hitler's Germany was responsible for the increased Jewish immigration to Palestine and the related problems.

During the Second World War, while Nazi Germany was killing six million Jews in Europe, German foreign policy turned back to the Middle East to focus on Iraq and the Grand Mufti. In 1937 the mufti had escaped the British, first to Lebanon then to Damascus; in October 1939 he went to Baghdad, where he continued to fight the British and the Jews. In April 1941, a pro-German coup in Iraq failed due to lack of German assistance while Hitler was fixated on Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the

Soviet Union. Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, stated at the time: 'Hitler certainly cast away the opportunity of taking a great prize for little cost in the Middle East'.¹ Grand Mufti Husseini fled from Baghdad to Berlin, where he was received by Hitler on 28 November 1941.

Germany went without a Middle East policy until the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in 1949. In the 1950s and early 1960s, West German money and arms helped Israel to survive, beginning in 1952 with a reparations agreement with Israel, implemented by German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, despite opposition from the Arab states. In 1957, Bonn started supplying weapons to Israel, which led to conflict with the Arab states in 1964/65 and the most severe crisis to that time to hit the Federal Republic: the pending diplomatic recognition of the GDR by the Arab states.

Then as now, fighting in the Middle East was also in many ways about oil. The Arab states first used oil as a political weapon in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, a conflict that made the United States the decisive factor in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the Israeli settlement policy strained the German–Israeli relationship. In 1978 Chancellor Helmut Schmidt declined an invitation to visit Israel because, as he told the Israeli ambassador in Bonn, he 'would express his criticism of the settlement policy openly' (see Chapter 6). Thereafter, Bonn backed the European Economic Community's policy and was instrumental in the Venice Declaration of June 1980, in which the EEC demanded that the Palestinians receive the right to self-determination and to participate in a peace settlement.

After Germany's reunification in 1990, the situation changed. When asked to take part in the 1991 Gulf War, Germany did not send soldiers, though it contributed considerable sums of money. Germany again declined to send soldiers when the Iraq War broke out in 2003. US president George W. Bush later accused German chancellor Gerhard Schröder of betrayal.

The 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War occasioned a number of relevant new publications in German about the different phases of German policy in the Middle East. The First World War and Kaiser Wilhelm II are treated by Alexander Will, Stefan M. Kreuzer Wilfried Loth/Marc Hanisch, Hansjörg Eiff and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz. Husseini and the Third Reich have been taken on by Klaus Gensicke, Jennie Lebel, Klaus-Michael Mallmann/Martin Cüppers, and again Wolfgang G. Schwanitz. For politics in Bonn, see Markus A. Weingart, Niels Hansen, Sven Olaf Berggötz and Frederik Schumann.² What had been missing was a short, compact summary of Germany's role in the Middle East from Kaiser Wilhelm to the present. This story, based on the most important records and the most recent literature, was presented in my original German language edition, *Deutschland und der Nahe Osten: Von Kaiser Wilhelms*

"GERMANY AND THE MIDDLE EAST: From Kaiser Wilhelm II to Angela Merkel" by Rolf Steininger.
<http://berghahnbooks.com/title/SteiningerGermany>

Orientreise 1898 bis zur Gegenwart (Reinbek and Munich: Lau, 2015, 259 pages), and is now available in English.

A few words should be said about the archival materials I used. The most important records for the interwar period are the reports of the German consul generals in Jerusalem published in *Der Kampf um Palästina 1924–1939*,³ and the reports of the Austrian consul generals published in *Berichte aus Jerusalem 1927–1938*.⁴ They offer authentic insights into what was happening in Palestine, as seen and analysed by the diplomats. The reports of the Austrian consul general end in March 1938, with the German Reich's *Anschluss* of Austria. German consul general, Walter Döhle, reported to Berlin on 21 March from Jerusalem:

On Saturday, the 12th of this month, on the morning of which the German troops crossed the Austrian border, I was asked at 7.30 in the evening, by the Austrian Consul General, to give him a swastika flag. This request was certainly met. On Sunday and Monday, the Austrian and German flags were raised on the Austrian Consulate General, on Tuesday only the German flag was raised. From the 17th of this month, no flag was raised because the Austrian office was closed. On the 18th of this month, the Austrian emblems were removed from the building.⁵

The documents for the Federal Republic of Germany are available in the series *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*.⁶ One volume of documents, *Zwischen Moral und Realpolitik*, was edited by Yeshayahu Jelinek;⁷ eight volumes titled *Der deutsch-israelische Dialog* were edited by Rolf Vogel;⁸ I myself edited the twelve volumes *Berichte aus Israel 1946–1972*, containing the reports that Austrian diplomats in Israel sent to Vienna;⁹ and two volumes covering the period 1972–1981 were published by Rudolf Agstner and me.¹⁰ William Burr of the National Security Archive in Washington published a number of documents on the Yom Kippur War, *The October War and U.S. Policy*,¹¹ and the volumes of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* are particularly relevant for this war and the Yom Kippur War of 1973.¹² In addition, Henry Kissinger himself published the text of phone calls he made during the Yom Kippur War.¹³

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Notes

1. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III: *The Grand Alliance* (Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 236; see also Chapter 4, 1.

2. Alexander Will, *Kein Griff nach der Weltmacht: Geheime Dienste und Propaganda im deutsch-österreichisch-türkischen Bündnis 1914–1918* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2012; see my review in MGZ 72, 2013); Stefan M. Kreutzer, *Dschihad für den deutschen Kaiser: Max von Oppenheim und die Neuordnung des Orients (1914–1918)* (Graz: Ares, 2012; see my review in MGZ 73, 2014); Wilfried Loth and Marc Hanisch (eds), *Erster Weltkrieg und Dschihad: Die Deutschen und die Revolutionierung des Orients* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014; see my review in MGZ 74, 2015); Hansjörg Eiff, 'Die jüdische Heimstätte in Palästina in der deutschen Außenpolitik 1914–1918', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 60 (2012), 3, 202–27; Hansjörg Eiff, 'Die jüdische Heimstätte in Palästina in der Außenpolitik der Weimarer Republik', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 61 (2013), 12, 1005–28; Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Islam in Europa, Revolten in Mittelost: Islamisten und Genozid von Wilhelm II und Enver Pascha über Hitler und al-Husaini bis Arafat, Usama Bin Laden und Ahmadinejad sowie Gespräche mit Bernard Lewis* (Berlin: trafo, 2013; see my review in MGZ 72, 2013); Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin–Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1998–1918* (London: Penguin, 2010); Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten: Eine politische Biographie Amin el-Husseini* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007); Jennie Lebel, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Haj-Amin el Husseini and National-Socialism* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2007; see my review of Gensicke and Lebel in MGZ 67, 2008); Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); Markus A. Weingardt, *Deutsche Israel- und Nahost-Politik: Die Geschichte einer Gratwanderung seit 1949* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2002); Niels Hansen, *Aus dem Schatten der Katastrophe: Die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen in der Ära Konrad Adenauer und David Ben Gurion* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002); Sven Olaf Berggötz, *Nahostpolitik in der Ära Adenauer: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen 1949–1963* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998); Frederik Schumann, *Die deutsche Nahostpolitik 1969–1973: Die sozial-liberale Koalition zwischen Interessenpolitik und moralischer Verpflichtung* (Saarbrücken: Akademikerverlag, 2012). In English there are only two collections of essays covering the years after 1945: Wolfgang G. Schwanitz (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East, 1871–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Wiener, 2004); and Shahram Chubin (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East: Patterns and Prospects* (Continuum International: New York, 1992); and for the Third Reich: Francis Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2000). See also Rolf Steininger, *Der Nahostkonflikt* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005; new edition 2012/14). [Nahostkonflikt]

3. Rolf Steininger (ed.), *Der Kampf um Palästina 1924–1939: Berichte der deutschen Generalkonsuln in Jerusalem* (Munich: Olzog, 2007). [Palästina]

4. Rolf Steininger and Rudolf Agstner (eds), *Berichte aus Jerusalem 1924–1938: Die Berichte der österreichischen Generalkonsuln* (Munich: Olzog, 2004). [Jerusalem]

5. 'Übernahme des österreichischen Generalkonsulats'. Walter Döhle (Jerusalem) an AA, 21 March 1938. Palästina, Doc. 119.

6. Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ed. on behalf of the Auswärtiges Amt, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994–2014). [AAPD]

7. Yeshayahu A. Jelinek (ed.), *Zwischen Moral und Realpolitik: Deutsch-israelische Beziehungen 1945–1965. Eine Dokumentensammlung* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1997). [Moral]

8. Rolf Vogel (ed.), *Der deutsch-israelische Dialog: Dokumentation eines erregenden Kapitels deutscher Außenpolitik*, 8 volumes (Munich: Saur, 1987).

9. Rolf Steininger (ed.), *Berichte aus Israel 1946–1972: Die Berichte der diplomatischen Vertreter Österreichs*, 12 volumes (Munich: Olzog, 2004). [Israel]; for more on this edition, see www.rolfsteininger.at/.

10. Rolf Steininger and Rudolf Agstner (eds), *Israel und der Nahostkonflikt 1972–1976* (Munich: Olzog, 2006). Rudolf Agstner and Rolf Steininger (eds), *Israel und der Nahostkonflikt 1976–1981* (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2016).

11. William Burr (ed.), *The October War and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: National Security Archive, 2003). [October War]
12. Department of State (ed.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968: Volume XIX: Arab–Israel Crisis and War, 1967* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2004); *1969–1976, Volume XXV: Arab–Israel Crisis and War, 1973* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2011). [FRUS]
13. Henry A. Kissinger, *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Policy Crises* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003). [Crisis]