

Iran and the parallels with Germany in 1914

Gideon Rachman argues from the false premise that a wider war may come about in the Middle East against the inclinations of the principals involved, using the analogy of the first world war (Opinion, October 31).

But if a wider war comes, it will be because Iran wants it. Hamas did not act independently of Iran, the timing of October 7 calculated to disrupt Saudi-Israel negotiations. Hizbollah is revving up in the north after consultations with Iran, whose creature it is. Iran's religious leaders may see war as a means to unify their country after the recent domestic tumults and view the moment propitious for finally removing the "Zionist entity".

Like Germany in 1914, Iran probably thinks it can make war on Israel without drawing in the US. Iran is to the Middle East what Germany was to Europe in 1914, and like Germany then will find that it has overextended itself.

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Threat of a Wider Mideast War

Sir, Gideon Rachman argues from the false premise that a wider war may come about in the Middle East against the inclinations of the principals involved, using the analogy of WW I, more specifically the example of German and Russian rulers who went to war ostensibly despite their efforts to avoid doing so ("The threat of a wider war in the Middle East" Opinion 31 October 2023).

In fact, Germany had wanted war with Russia, having felt threatened by Russia's rapid economic development and growing military might. The General Staff calculated that war would be necessary by 1916 when the construction of Russia's strategic railways to Poland would be completed. They mistakenly thought they could confine the war to the East. So, when the Tsar ordered a partial mobilization against Austria who was descending on Serbia, he received assurance from Von Moltke that Germany would not declare war. But as the partial mobilization proceeded, Moltke reversed himself, letting it be known through diplomatic channels that Germany indeed saw this as a *causus belli*. The Tsar promptly ordered a general mobilization, whereupon Germany used the fact as a reason to declare war. Germany inveigled Russia into war.

The analogy with the Middle East is that if a wider war comes, it will because Iran wants it. Hamas did not act independently of Iran, the timing of October 7 calculated to disrupt Saudi-Israel negotiations. Hizbollah is revving up in the north after consultations with Iran, whose creature it is. The Mullahs may see war as a means to unify the country after the recent domestic tumults and the moment propitious for finally removing the "Zionist entity." Like Germany in 1914, Iran likely thinks it can make war on Israel without drawing in the US. Iran is to the Middle East what Germany was to Europe in 1914, and like Germany then will find that it has overextended itself.

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