

Germany is strengthening its influence in Egypt

Artur Ciechanowicz

The foreign ministers of Germany and Egypt met at consultations on 12 August in Berlin. Mohamed Kamel Amr, the new foreign minister of Egypt, went on his first foreign visit to Turkey and Germany. This is an effect of Berlin's active policy in an attempt to strengthen its position in Egypt following the fall of Hosni Mubarak.

A 'Berlin Declaration' was published following the consultations, in which the two ministers undertook to further develop co-operation and partnership. In this declaration, Germany promised to write off 240 million euros of debt owed by Egypt within the next four years. The money saved this way would be considered as German development aid. Guido Westerwelle also promised that Germany would offer Egypt 150 million euros more by 2013 to build democratic institutions. Germany intends to continue developing economic co-operation with Egypt and to make efforts to open up European markets to Egyptian products. Last year, imports from Egypt to the EU reached 7.2 billion euros (including 955 million euros to Germany) and exports were worth 14.8 billion euros (including 2.98 billion from Germany).

The latest German undertakings are an element of a new active policy from Germany towards Egypt, where parliamentary and presidential elections are likely to be held already this year. On 24 February, the German foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, and the minister for development aid were among the first Western politicians of this rank to visit Egypt. Democratic movements could count on support from German political foundations from the beginning of their operation. In turn, experts from the Federal Commission for the Stasi Archives are helping the new government to secure archives from the Mubarak regime. Germany is using the change of the ruling class in Egypt to enhance its economic and political influence in North Africa. <ciechan>