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What Lies Ahead for the New German Government in the Middle East

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As geopolitical tensions and conflicts reshape the Middle East and North Africa region, Germany must balance diplomacy, development, and security. From post-conflict reconstruction and energy transitions to managing rising authoritarianism, Germany's ability to lead as a stabilising force will depend on European Union cooperation, targeted economic engagement, and sustainable policy frameworks.

- In Syria, conditional cooperation with the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham-led administration will need to focus on human rights, minority protection, anti-corruption efforts, and limiting renewed Russian influence.
- To stabilise Lebanon, Germany must link financial aid to governance reforms, applying EU-level sanctions to curb Hezbollah's influence while fostering civil society to prevent sectarian tensions from escalating.
- In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Germany will need to insist on the application of international humanitarian law to safeguard its reputation as a civilian power that is committed to multilateralism.
- Nearshoring, renewable energy expansion, and managing political risks will be key in the Maghreb, including around Morocco's succession, Western Sahara tensions, and rising authoritarianism in Tunisia.
- With Iran's nuclear ambitions and its regional-destabilisation strategies, Germany's diplomatic leverage in a renewed JCPOA should include targeted sanctions relief and post-conflict contingency plans for potential military escalation.
- New avenues for German partnerships with Gulf countries exist regarding the energy transition, particularly on green hydrogen.

Policy Implications

Germany should use its EU leverage to foster multilateral reconstruction in Syria and Lebanon, encourage nuclear diplomacy with Iran, bring an end to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, deepen Maghreb economic partnerships, integrate Gulf cooperation on energy, and recalibrate arms-export policies to safeguard security without prolonging regional conflicts.

The Many Challenges Ahead

Germany's strategic engagement with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is multifaceted, requiring a balance being struck between immediate conflict management and long-term regional development. Under the Olaf Scholz administration, Germany's MENA policy has remained largely consistent, with key adjustments coming in response to regional crises ([Osiewicz 2022](#)). With Germany continuing to position itself as a leading actor in the stabilisation of the international order, mapped out in consequence are the various interconnected challenges currently faced across the region.

Syria: Navigating Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Strategic Diplomacy

Germany has adopted a pragmatic yet principled approach to Syria's ongoing transition ([Deutsche Welle 2025](#)), balancing stability, human rights, and adherence to international norms. As the country enters a new political phase under Ahmad al-Sharaa's presidency and with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) consolidating its grip on power, Germany's foreign policy must remain strategic, conditional, and responsive to regional developments. Germany's post-conflict engagement strategies in the MENA region have drawn from past diplomatic efforts, such as the Berlin Conference on Libya, which highlighted the European country's ability to mediate complex conflicts and mobilise international support ([Formuszewicz 2020](#)). Germany's core priorities lie in managing engagement, ensuring stability, and maintaining leverage in a post-conflict Syria.

Normalisation with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham: Parameters for diplomatic engagement

With the ascension of al-Sharaa as Syria's president and HTS assuming a central leadership role, Germany's policy choices must be informed by rigorous conditionality. Normalisation efforts must not tacitly endorse extremist governance and thus insist on a constitutional process. Engagement must be premised on the institutionalisation of human rights protections, the guaranteed provision of unrestricted humanitarian aid, and the establishment of transparent, accountable governance structures consistent with international democratic norms.

Furthermore, HTS must demonstrate a credible commitment to the systematic dismantling of extremist elements within its ranks and active cooperation on counterterrorism initiatives. Political enfranchisement for Syria's diverse ethno-religious constituencies, particularly Kurdish and minority populations, should be a non-negotiable aspect of any diplomatic arrangement. Lastly, HTS must unequivocally commit to multilateral stabilisation and post-conflict reconstruction programmes. Germany's precedent of lifting sanctions under specific conditions – such as verifiable human rights improvements and anti-corruption measures, as seen in its support for easing EU sanctions on Belarus in 2016 following the release of political prisoners – must serve as the foundational benchmark for further engagement with the HTS-led administration. Any deviation from these commitments should result in a recalibration of Germany's diplomatic stance.

Strategic pressure on Turkey and Israel concerning the Occupied Territories, and the risk of continued Russian influence

The ongoing territorial assertions by Turkey in northern Syria, Israel's occupation of the United Nations buffer zone in addition to its continued occupation of the Golan Heights, and Russia's negotiations with the new regime over a continuance of its military bases in Syria pose substantial geopolitical challenges. Germany, through its leverage within the European Union and NATO, should adopt a calibrated strategy that pressures Turkey to cease territorial expansion, particularly in Afrin and other northern regions, by linking economic cooperation with compliance on territorial non-expansion. Furthermore, access to EU trade privileges and defence agreements should be made conditional on a demonstrable cessation of Turkish military operations in Syria. Concurrently, Germany should advocate through the UN for the reconstitution of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights, restoring international oversight as it was before the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011. These efforts should also address Israel's recent occupation of the UN buffer zone, ensuring that UNDOF can effectively monitor and enforce ceasefire agreements as originally intended. Discussions on sanction relief and economic incentives should take into account the risk of renewed Russian assertiveness in operating on Syrian soil.

The Kurdish question: Ensuring political and security guarantees

The Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) remains a crucial stabilising force in Syria, yet its political future continues to be uncertain. Germany must advocate for the formal inclusion of Kurdish representatives in international peace negotiations and post-conflict governance structures, ensuring that their role in Syria's future is not but a marginal one. Establishing legal frameworks that guarantee the cultural, linguistic, and political rights of Kurdish populations is essential to securing long-term stability. Furthermore, Germany should expand material and diplomatic support to strengthen economic resilience in AANES-administered territories, reducing dependency on external actors and mitigating the risks of Turkish military incursions and forced displacement. In light of recent calls for the PKK's disarmament and potential shifts in Kurdish-Turkish relations, Germany should use its leverage within the EU and NATO to push for a political settlement that safeguards Kurdish autonomy while addressing Turkey's security concerns, preventing further escalation and fostering sustainable regional stability.

The management of ISIS detainees and camp-decongestion strategies

The extensive presence of ISIS-affiliated detainees and their families within makeshift detention facilities constitutes an enduring security liability. Germany should spearhead initiatives that promote an UN-administered judicial mechanism for adjudicating ISIS-related offences within Syria, ensuring due process while addressing security concerns too. Additionally, Germany should facilitate the repatriation and prosecution of European nationals detained in Syria, advocating for international legal standards being applied in their handling. Securing international funding for detention infrastructures and robust deradicalisation

programmes within AANES-administered regions will be crucial to mitigating the long-term security threat posed by these detainees.

Migration policy: Addressing influx risks and labour-market integration

Given the current instability in Syria, large-scale refugee returns remain problematic due to ongoing security risks, conscription policies, and economic hardship. Germany should adopt a balanced approach that upholds humanitarian principles while addressing domestic economic realities. Rather than advocating for forced repatriation, policies should focus on strengthening labour-market-integration programmes that allow Syrian refugees to contribute meaningfully to Germany's workforce, thereby supporting both social cohesion and economic growth further to benefitting these individuals themselves, too. Additionally, Germany should work closely with EU partners to develop a coordinated response that emphasises structured, work-based migration pathways, ensuring a policy framework that is both pragmatic and sustainable in the long term.

Economic reconstruction and the role of Gulf Cooperation Council states

Syria's post-conflict economic reconstruction is imperative, but it must be conducted within a framework that prevents authoritarian entrenchment. Germany should engage with the GCC states on financing redevelopment efforts under stringent conditions. Infrastructure and economic aid must be tied to anti-corruption measures as well as international monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability and effectiveness. Establishing a multilateral oversight committee to regulate financial flows will be essential to preventing external investments from reinforcing existing power structures that undermine democratic governance.

Lebanon: Stabilising Governance and Countering Hezbollah

Supporting the new presidency and government formation

Germany should actively support Lebanon's newly elected president and government, namely by fostering political and economic resilience via comprehensive diplomatic and financial measures. Political stability in Lebanon is crucial for regional security; Germany, in coordination with EU allies, should take a leadership role in ensuring that governance reforms are both effective and sustainable. This entails direct diplomatic engagement to mediate political disputes, financial assistance aimed at reinforcing state institutions, and the facilitation of economic-recovery programmes designed to reduce dependency on external actors. Germany could achieve this through a revival of the International Support Group (ISG) for Lebanon framework, which includes itself, France, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other key actors. Germany should leverage its role in the ISG to advance diplomatic initiatives, coordinate financial-aid packages to reinforce Lebanese state institutions, and promote sustainable economic recovery that reduces reliance on external actors.

German foreign policy emphasises leveraging financial aid as a key incentive for inducing governance reform. The European country's aid policies in the MENA region have historically been tied to purposeful institutional developments, as highlighted in its responses after the Arab Spring (Furness 2019). This is particularly apt in Lebanon, where diplomatic relations remain a core focus (Federal Foreign Office 2024). Given Lebanon's entrenched corruption and institutional fragility, Germany should make such financial support contingent on robust anti-corruption mechanisms, enhanced transparency in the public administration, and independent judicial oversight. Such conditions would strengthen the credibility of the new leadership while preventing undue influence from foreign-backed political factions. Furthermore, Germany should advocate for electoral and legal reforms that promote inclusive governance, ensuring that Lebanon's political system is more representative and resistant to external manipulation. By reinforcing democratic institutions and fostering a rules-based domestic order, Germany can help Lebanon chart a course towards long-term stability and resilience.

Weakening Hezbollah and the Axis of Resistance

Hezbollah remains a force in Lebanon, wielding substantial political and military influence. While not yet defeated, strategic pressure must be applied to curb its power and reduce its alignment with Iran's wider regional ambitions. Germany should leverage its diplomatic position within the EU to push for broader sanctions on Hezbollah's funding networks and enhance intelligence-sharing efforts to disrupt illicit financing. Additionally, rather than pursuing direct confrontation, Germany should support capacity-building within the Lebanese state – including via institutional reforms, counter-corruption measures, and financial aid being made contingent on strengthening non-sectarian governance and security structures. Targeted assistance being provided to Lebanon's security forces, including training on counter-smuggling operations, border security, and internal stability, would help constrain Hezbollah's operational freedom without provoking outright conflict. The objective is to gradually reassert state authority by empowering institutions that can offer alternatives to Hezbollah's parallel structures, making it less indispensable over time.

Preventing ethnic and sectarian strife

Lebanon's fragile sectarian balance is under growing strain, particularly as Hezbollah's weakened position fuels uncertainty within Shia communities and heightens tensions with other social groups. Targeted interventions are essential to prevent renewed violence and instability. Germany should fund and expand local reconciliation committees and grassroots mediation efforts that directly address sectarian grievances, particularly in areas where tensions are now escalating due to shifting power dynamics. Additionally, the European country should support municipal-level mediation initiatives that empower local leaders – particularly in Tripoli, Akkar, and the Bekaa Valley, where Hezbollah's political recalibration has left power vacuums and increased sectarian competition. Stabilisation efforts should prioritise addressing economic discontent in Shia-majority areas, at risk of further alienation as Hezbollah's financial networks come under increased strain. Infrastructure investments, such as renewable-energy projects and voca-

tional-training programmes, should be designed to integrate multiple sectarian communities and reduce competition over limited resources.

Israel and Palestine: Paths Towards Lasting Stability and Cooperation

Strengthening Germany's role as a civilian power through constructive engagement

Germany's role as a protector and upholder of the international rules-based order has long been a pillar of its foreign policy and global reputation. This role becomes even more critical in complex conflicts like the Israeli–Palestinian one, where Germany can demonstrate leadership by promoting human rights, stability, and cooperation. To maintain this position, it must balance its commitments to international legal frameworks, such as those upheld by the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, with its long-standing policy of supporting Israel's security. Constructive engagement with these institutions can help Germany advocate for a rules-based approach that addresses the continued occupation of Palestinian lands, while ensuring its bilateral relations with Israel remain cooperative and forward-looking. By championing solutions that address the rights and security needs of all stakeholders, Germany can continue to act as a bridge-builder and a model for responsible international engagement.

Balancing arms exports with strategic interests and ethical standards

Germany's arms exports to the MENA region have been subject to criticism for their role in catalysing regional militarisation ([Hüllinghorst and Roll 2021](#)). Germany has become Israel's second-largest arms supplier after the US ([SIPRI 2024](#)). The horrendous death toll in the latest Gaza War and the deliberation of international courts on whether Israel has engaged in genocide and other war crimes affects Germany's international reputation, especially in countries of the Global South. As a self-styled civilian power that seeks to develop international institutions and respect for global norms it needs to take that viewpoint into consideration. At the same time, Germany relies on Israeli arms exports and military technology in strategic sectors such as drone- and cyber warfare. The Arrow 3 missile defence system is also a cornerstone of a planned European air-defence system, demonstrating the strategic importance of this bilateral military relationship.

However, Germany's traditional policy of limiting arms exports to conflict zones introduces further tensions and complexities here, especially as it seeks to align arms procurement with its long-standing aspirations as a civilian power. A re-assessment of this policy is necessary – not to reduce dependence, but to ensure that future arms transfers and collaborations adhere to ethical standards without compromising national security. Germany should critically assess its defence cooperation with Israel, ensuring that military technologies are not used in ways that exacerbate conflicts or violate international norms. Rather than relying solely on oversight mechanisms and policy reviews, Germany must establish clear red lines for arms transfers and be prepared to suspend deliveries if their misuse is evident. Balancing strategic interests with ethical considerations will require

a more transparent approach that acknowledges the risks of deepening military entanglement in volatile regions.

Promoting sustainable ceasefires and a comprehensive security vision

Germany and the EU at large have so far played a marginal role in ceasefire negotiations and post-war planning regarding Gaza, with diplomatic pressure having primarily come from the US and key Arab states. This absence has undermined Europe's potential influence in shaping long-term solutions. To correct this, Germany should push for a stronger European role in related mediation efforts, ensuring that EU diplomats are not sidelined. Rather than simply advocating for multilateral security arrangements, Germany must pressure its EU partners to take on a proactive role in moulding peace frameworks, including direct engagement with regional stakeholders. Furthermore, any proposed forms of EU–Israeli defence collaboration must be balanced with a ironclad commitment to international law, ensuring that European security initiatives do not unintentionally contribute to prolonged conflict. By demanding greater European involvement and accountability in ceasefire negotiations, Germany can work to establish a more credible and strategic role for Europe in the MENA region.

Germany can play a crucial role in mediating sustainable ceasefires between Israel and Palestinian factions, emphasising that lasting peace requires a political vision addressing the core security needs of both peoples. By leveraging its standing within the EU, Germany should advocate for multilateral security arrangements involving regional actors and international guarantees. Proposals could include joint EU–Israeli defence collaboration, cooperative regional threat-detection systems, and multilateral peace initiatives supported by moderate Arab states. Germany's emphasis on a comprehensive security vision would signal to Israel that diplomatic solutions can complement military deterrence, fostering trust in mechanisms designed to guarantee long-term stability.

The Gulf: Reconstruction, Energy Transitions, and Strategic Cooperation

Partnering with the Gulf for regional reconstruction

Germany's recalibration of its Gulf policy reflects a shift towards more pragmatic and strategic engagement with key regional players (Sons 2023). It must collaborate with GCC countries, leveraging their financial capacity while ensuring transparency and alignment with international development goals. The Gulf states, particularly Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, have demonstrated a willingness to invest in post-conflict reconstruction projects. Germany should act as a bridge between the EU and Gulf nations, ensuring that reconstruction aid is directed towards rebuilding critical infrastructure, education, and healthcare systems in the regions most affected by conflict. Robust monitoring mechanisms must be established to prevent the misuse of funds and to promote sustainable development.

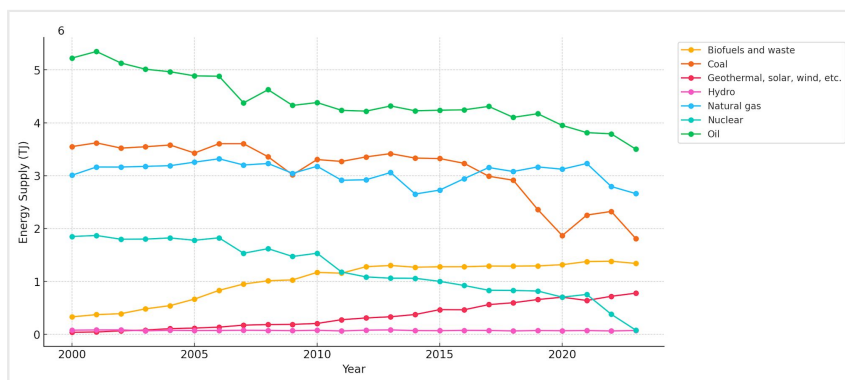
In Lebanon, reconstruction initiatives should prioritise revitalising public services and rebuilding economic infrastructure that has been damaged by political instability, the Beirut Port explosion, and the recent war. In Syria, Germany can collaborate with the GCC states to ensure that reconstruction projects focus on areas outside regime control and are conditioned on tangible governance reforms. Similarly, coordination with the Gulf states could also help to prevent ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip, as proposed by US President Donald Trump and Israeli right-wing extremists. This would ensure that reconstruction contributes to long-term stability, namely by addressing basic needs while avoiding the entrenchment of radical groups.

Green-energy cooperation, and tensions with OPEC+ policies

Germany's partnerships in Africa are central to its broader strategy of energy diversification and climate diplomacy (Müller 2023). The Gulf region is a critical partner in the European country's broader energy-transition strategy, particularly in the development of green-hydrogen projects. As Germany seeks to diversify its energy portfolio and reduce dependence on fossil fuels, cooperation with the GCC countries can provide mutual benefits. Its expertise in renewable-energy technologies can complement the Gulf's investment capacity, creating a framework for the large-scale production and export of green hydrogen.

However, tensions may arise from the conflicting interests of promoting clean energy while navigating the Gulf states' commitments to OPEC+ policies and the oil market, as well as Germany's continued need for significant amounts of fossil fuels. As the trends regarding its total energy supply demonstrate, fossil fuels continue to make up a substantial share of the country's energy mix, underscoring the challenge of balancing renewables-related ambitions with ongoing energy-security concerns (see Figure 1 below). Germany must engage in candid dialogue with key Gulf partners, advocating for a gradual shift towards renewables without destabilising their economies. To do this, Germany should encourage joint investment in green projects, such as solar and hydrogen plants, while also offering technological and policy support to facilitate the energy transition. Such partnerships would help balance the Gulf's energy-export-driven economies with global climate goals, positioning Germany as a leader in sustainable international cooperation.

Figure 1. Evolution of Germany's Energy Sources (Total Energy Supply) over Time



Source: IEA 2024.

Notes: Total energy supply includes all the energy produced in or imported to a country, minus that which is exported or stored. It represents all the energy required to supply end users in the country. Some of these energy sources are used directly while most are transformed into fuels or electricity for final consumption.

Strengthening long-term partnerships through diplomatic engagement

Beyond economic cooperation, Germany should strengthen its strategic ties with the Gulf states through enhanced diplomatic initiatives. By addressing shared security concerns, such as regional stability, counterterrorism, and migration, Germany can foster long-lasting partnerships that benefit both sides. Regular high-level dialogue formats should be established to align reconstruction priorities, energy transitions, and political cooperation. Germany's ability to act as a trusted interlocutor between the EU and the Gulf will be essential in coordinating effective multilateral solutions that address both humanitarian and strategic objectives.

Through sustained collaboration on reconstruction and clean energy, Germany can ensure that its involvement in the region supports the rebuilding of war-torn areas while fostering the wider global transition to sustainable energy. By balancing short-term reconstruction needs with long-term climate and economic goals, Germany will hereby reinforce its role as a guardian of the international order and a promoter of sustainable development.

The Maghreb: Strategic Partnerships, Nearshoring, and Addressing Authoritarianism

Strengthening economic and strategic cooperation with key Maghreb states

Germany has long considered the Maghreb region a preferred partner due to its strategic location, energy potential, and emerging role in supply-chain diversification. As nearshoring becomes increasingly attractive as a way to counter ongoing global supply-chain disruptions, Germany should prioritise regional investment in key industries, particularly in Morocco and Tunisia, to foster deeper economic ties. This includes incentivising German firms to shift production facilities to the region, creating mutually beneficial partnerships vis-à-vis manufacturing, technology, and renewables.

Morocco, as the most politically stable of the Maghreb states, represents an ideal partner for both economic cooperation and Germany's broader strategy for its own energy transition. However, the European country must carefully navigate its stance on the Western Sahara conflict, where pressure exists to align with the US, Spain, and France in recognising Moroccan sovereignty. Despite optimism surrounding green-hydrogen partnerships, Germany's reliance on Moroccan projects comes with both opportunities and challenges (Baumann 2021). Berlin should adopt a balanced approach, supporting UN-led negotiations to ensure a peaceful and internationally accepted resolution while maintaining close diplomatic and economic ties with Rabat.

Cooperation on energy transitions and green hydrogen

Morocco and Algeria hold significant potential for renewable-energy partnerships, particularly regarding solar, wind, and green-hydrogen production. Germany's existing collaboration with Morocco on the latter of these should be expanded, with further investments aimed at scaling production and ensuring export potential to Europe being made. Algeria, with its vast natural-gas resources and potential for solar power, could also be integrated into Germany's green-energy strategy, balancing fossil-fuel reliance with long-term sustainable development.

However, working with Algeria comes with its potential issues. While existing military cooperation, including truck exports and logistics support, can be leveraged to deepen ties, Germany should push for clearer commitments from the North African country on energy diversification and political reform. The goal should be a gradual transition towards sustainable energy sources while maintaining mutually beneficial trade relations.

Addressing the challenge of authoritarianism 2.0 in Tunisia

Once hailed the success story of the Arab Spring, Tunisia now faces continued democratic backsliding under President Kais Saied. The resurgence of authoritarian tendencies, including restrictions on political freedoms and the erosion of democratic institutions, poses a challenge to Germany's long-term engagement here-with. Rather than pull away completely, Germany should adopt a dual strategy: on the one side, offering economic incentives, particularly in the areas of green technology and job creation, while, on the other, conditioning financial aid on governance reform. Germany's support for civil society organisations, independent media, and legal reforms should be strengthened to counter Tunisia's democratic regression. Diplomatic pressure, combined with technical and financial assistance, can help the country maintain its fragile democratic gains and avoid the further descent into authoritarianism.

Preparing for leadership transitions and regional stability

Risks around political succession are an often-overlooked aspect of regional engagement. In Morocco, where the eventual end of King Mohammed VI's rule is inevitable, Germany should position itself as a trusted partner, supporting smooth transitions of power that work to maintain stability. Similarly, it should

be prepared to engage with Algeria's evolving political landscape, where internal power shifts could affect the two countries' existing economic and military cooperation. By fostering long-term relationships with emerging political leaders and civil society actors, Germany can help ensure that regional stability is preserved through these peaceful transitions.

Iran: A Renewed JCPOA and Strategic Contingencies

Negotiating a new JCPOA: Strategic leverage and diplomatic openings

Germany has long advocated for diplomacy as the most effective means of addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions. However, the current reality presents significant obstacles to that. The International North-South Transport Corridor to Russia has largely failed to deliver strategic gains for Iran, while European promises of sanctions relief have not materialised. Meanwhile, the end of the JCPOA looms large with no clear European initiative to salvage it, as Tehran has advanced its nuclear capabilities beyond previous thresholds. Iranian expectations of concessions from the E3 (France, Germany, Italy) have largely gone unmet, and with snapback sanctions under UN Security Council Resolution 2231 set to expire in October 2025 Europe remains without a unified response. The lack of a proactive European stance risks ceding the diplomatic field entirely to the US and regional Arab powers. Germany must press for a more assertive European role, ensuring that any engagement with Iran includes concrete red lines on nuclear and regional de-escalation while preparing for the failure of diplomacy. This means shifting towards a clearer containment strategy, strengthening ties with Gulf allies, and aligning European defence policies to better counter Tehran's growing regional influence.

Contingency planning: Responding to escalation scenarios

While Germany must prioritise diplomacy, it cannot ignore the possibility of military escalation involving the US and/or Israel targeting Iran's nuclear facilities. If such an outcome should occur, Germany's response should prioritise immediate de-escalation efforts while addressing the geopolitical shifts arising from this turn of events. This means leveraging existing influence to mediate between key regional actors, coordinating with EU partners to prevent any broader confrontation, and focusing on diplomatic interventions that help quell further escalation and prevent regional spillover effects. This would involve immediate diplomatic engagement with EU partners and the UN to avoid further escalation. Germany must also work proactively with regional and international partners to create readily implementable de-escalation mechanisms, utilising backchannel diplomacy to negate conflict expansion; its diplomatic engagement in Iran–Israel mediation aligns with the European country's broader commitment to de-escalation, as previously suggested by [Murciano \(2018\)](#).

Germany needs to speak out forcefully against human rights violations and authoritarian repression by the Iranian state against its domestic opponents as well as members of the diaspora alike. At the same time, being drawn into actions that could be perceived as endorsing regime change should be avoided. Instead, Ger-

many's role should centre on creating channels for post-conflict dialogue, emphasising the importance of long-term regional security and the restoration of diplomatic negotiations. Concurrently, the European country must assess the potential impact of unfavourable developments on its own energy security, particularly if conflict onset comes to disrupt oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz. In such scenarios, Germany's collaboration with Gulf partners on energy diversification, including green hydrogen, would be critical to its resilience.

Balancing pressure and engagement

Germany should maintain a balance between coercion and cooperation. While supporting robust non-proliferation measures, it should also foster cultural, academic, and civil society exchange to build long-term ties with the Iranian population at large. This dual approach will ensure that Germany remains a key mediator capable of influencing both immediate and long-term outcomes. By positioning itself as a consistent proponent of diplomacy, the European country can safeguard its own interests while simultaneously maintain credibility as a leader on conflict resolution within the international system.

Conclusion: A Cohesive Strategy for Regional Stability and Long-Term Engagement

Germany's engagement in the MENA region must be defined by strategic pragmatism, balancing diplomatic initiatives with targeted economic and security measures. As regional conflicts evolve, it cannot afford to remain passive. Instead, Berlin must actively shape policies that uphold its commitment to international norms while securing its strategic interests.

Despite their economic influence, Germany and the EU have remained largely absent from key geopolitical negotiations, particularly as regards ceasefire agreements and post-war planning. This lack of strategic initiative has diminished the country's and the continent's leverage in shaping outcomes in Syria, Lebanon, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. To rectify this, Germany must push for a more assertive European role in mediation efforts while ensuring any economic aid provided does not inadvertently help entrench authoritarianism or fuel sectarian divides.

Germany's arms-export policies must also be reassessed in light of its growing defence ties with Israel, ensuring that security cooperation aligns with ethical considerations, legal obligations, and does not contribute to prolonged conflicts, either. The shifting dynamics to relations with Iran require a recalibrated European strategy that integrates firm red lines on nuclear proliferation with contingency planning for potential military confrontation.

Energy cooperation with the Gulf and the Maghreb offers opportunities for long-term economic well-being all round. However, these partnerships must be carefully managed to prevent dependencies and align with sustainability goals. Ultimately, Germany's success in the MENA region will depend on its ability to act decisively, leverage EU partnerships, and expound a coherent and strategic foreign policy that reflects its long-term interests.

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