

The International Response to Crisis in the Middle East: A German Approach

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The wider Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, stretching from Western Sahara through North Africa, the Middle East, to the Hindu Kush, is arguably the most crisis-ridden in the world. The war in Syria, the refugee crisis and the fight against so-called “Islamic State” (IS) terrorism dominate the headlines. They are phenomena of many territorial, ideological, socioeconomic and hegemonic conflicts complexly intertwined across the broader MENA region.

Between Washington and Berlin there is a difference of opinion as to which countries belong to the region. The Near East Office of the U.S. Department of State includes 18 Arab states, Israel and Iran in the region. The “Broader Middle East and North Africa region” (BMENA), a term introduced by U.S. President George W. Bush, also includes Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the Arab state of Mauritania. Israel is excluded in this context from the region because of its economic strength. In its understanding of the region, the German Foreign Office places Turkey in the Europe portfolio and most of the Arab countries, Israel and Iran under the purview of the Middle East-North Africa Directorate.

This article counts the 22 member states of the Arab League, Israel, Turkey and Iran as belonging to the MENA region. At the same time, the spillover effects of crises in the bordering countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Sahara region are also important.

The area stretching from Western Sahara to the Hindu Kush accounts for most of the world’s crises and wars. The refugee crisis, the fight against the Islamic State, and civil wars in Syria and parts of Iraq have caught the public’s attention in

Germany, dominating media headlines and decision-makers’ agendas. While its policymakers tend to promote multilateral and diplomatic solutions, Berlin feels increasing pressure to take hard security measures against terrorism at home and in the MENA region. It is unclear, though, how much involvement Germany’s allies expect of it and how much the German public would accept.

1. The Civil War in Syria and Western Iraq

From the bankrupt estate of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the British and French colonial powers divided much of the Middle East into states with artificial borders, including Iraq and Syria, which are home to 12 ethnic and religious groups. The military dictatorships of Hafez al-Assad in Syria (1971–2000) and Saddam Hussein in Iraq (1979–2003) failed to organize the political and economic participation of these groups into an inclusive state structure. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 toppled President Saddam Hussein and accelerated the disintegration of Iraq into three parts: Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis. The uprising against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, which began in 2011, has plunged the country into civil war and fractured it into six domains.

What began as a local war in Syria quickly took on a dangerous dimension as powers in the region intervened, supporting various warring parties and switching alliances. Then in 2015, two events added another dimension to the war:

1. Russian President Vladimir Putin militarily intervened on the side of the Assad regime while the administration of U.S. President Obama worked to train and arm some

opposition groups. Washington and Moscow differ on the future of Assad and which opposition groups are to be treated as terrorist groups.

2. Both Russia and the United States took the initiative to fight the Islamic State militarily in Syria.

Turkey's main focus is limiting Kurdish sovereignty on its border with Iraq, Syria and Iran. Iran seeks to strengthen the Shiite Hezbollah militias and needs the Assad regime in Damascus as a bridgehead in Lebanon for this purpose. Saudi Arabia sees itself as a protector of the Sunnis and seeks to push back against Iranian influence in the Middle East. Moscow and Washington both want to fight Islamic terrorism, but the United States would also like to drive back Russian and Iranian influence in the region, while Putin seeks to elevate his position militarily and diplomatically.

Israel has stayed out of the fray, discreetly providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian rebel groups across the Golan border. Occasionally, the Israeli air force bombs alleged Iranian rocket transports to Hezbollah militias in Lebanon, which have benefited from Russia's military intervention on behalf of the Assad regime and Iran. Given that this new power axis views Israel as a strategic threat, Israel is intensifying its unofficial cooperation with Iran's adversaries Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, and building up its military-technical capability with U.S. assistance.

The deep mistrust among the local warring parties and the power rivalries in the Middle East thwart any significant political process, and the political actors remain absent from the negotiating tables in Geneva. Despite UN resolutions (UNSC-Res 2254 and 2268) and agreements, the United States and Russia are still too far apart in their positions on the war in Syria to be able to pressure the regional and local parties in the conflict to make political concessions. This stalemate might break if presidents Donald Trump and Putin realize the rapprochement they have already expressed verbally.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Syria worsens. Prior to the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, 23 million people lived in the country; of that figure, 5 million have fled abroad and 8 million are internally displaced.

In light of the increased influx of Syrian refugees to Germany since 2015, the complex conflicts in and around Syria have become a German domestic issue.

2. The Fight against the So-Called Islamic State

Since 2014, a coalition of more than 60 countries has been fighting from the air and on the ground in western Iraq and northern and eastern Syria to defeat the Islamic State, which is losing territory.

The fight against the terrorist group was a priority for the Obama administration in the Middle East, and U.S. military

and political engagement is leading the West. Germany has provided military equipment and training to the Kurdish peshmerga in northern Iraq since 2014 for the ground fight against the Islamic State. This is a major political step, approved by the German federal parliament, the Bundestag, for a government that has in the past refrained from using German weaponry in regions of conflict and war outside NATO.

The German public also takes an enormous interest in the fight against the Islamic State, which hundreds of young Germans have joined as fighters, with some returning radicalized to Germany. Moreover in 2014, Iraqi Yazidis, Christians and Kurds who have lived in Germany for decades urgently called for German support and protection for their compatriots in Iraq who were being driven out and killed by the Islamic State. With many in Germany wondering how the Islamic State was able to become so strong in the MENA region, it is worth looking at the factors that led to the organization's initial success in 2014 and 2015. The Islamic State:

- Was able to rely on the minority Sunni tribes in Iraq that have been politically and economically marginalized by the central government in Baghdad.
- Has experience in terror organization and warfare. Among its leaders are former officers of Saddam Hussein's military and secret service, Arab jihadists who have already fought in Afghanistan and the Caucasus, and jailed Islamists released by Syria's Assad.
- Offered a regular monthly income to people who are unemployed, including former members of the police and secret services of Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen.
- Provided directionless individuals with clear ideological rules of conduct, distinct hierarchical structures and guidance on right and wrong.
- Raised considerable sums from ransom payments, extortion, ambushes, antiquities smuggling, human trafficking, the arms and drug trades, and the illegal sale of crude oil.
- Bases its ideology on jihadi currents of the ultra-conservative Salafist movement and indoctrinates many young Sunnis and converts via the internet and social media in Europe and the Arabian Peninsula.
- Successfully uses videos of suicide attacks and executions to spread terror and recruit fighters.
- Maintains training camps outside its borders, in failed states such as Yemen and Libya.
- Provided many poor people, from Raqqa to Mosul, with medical care, food and education at the zenith of its power in 2014 and 2015.

Now on its heels, the Islamic State has largely abandoned its "winning hearts and minds" approach and relies on brutal

coercion to intimidate its own fighters and the local population in the territory it still controls.

Outside the Middle East, it is difficult to identify all potential IS terrorists because some act as so-called “lone wolves” influenced by Islamic State propaganda. These are primarily young Muslim men, radicalized and incited by terrorist messages, who, sometimes with the help of friends, take it upon themselves to carry out attacks that the Islamic State then advertises as its own. The attacks against innocent civilians in Orlando in the United States and Würzburg in Germany bear this signature. The lone wolves often lead double lives, behaving normally and inconspicuously in daily life, while radicalizing via the internet. Thus, it is often difficult for the authorities to intercept these sleeper cells in time.

3. The Refugee Crisis

The civil war in Syria, Islamic State rule, Russia’s military intervention, and the Iraqi army and Kurdish and Shiite militias’ fight against the Islamic State in northern Iraq have driven hundreds of thousands of people to flee to Europe and particularly Germany. Most of the 1.3 million asylum seekers applying for asylum in the European Union in 2015 are Syrians and Iraqis,¹ of whom around 900,000 came to Germany within a period of nine months.² According to the European border agency, Frontex, more than 350,000 people have entered the EU in 2016—thus keeping the German public and policymakers focused on the refugee issue.

The refugee influx from North Africa and the Middle East is pushing Berlin to craft policies that address the forces pushing people into Europe, some of which are outlined below.

1. The situation of the refugees in the host countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and northern Iraq has stabilized as a result of international aid, but it is not clear how long that stability will last. It is crucial to continue to support the host countries and international aid organizations in order to enable refugees to remain in those countries. Unstable situations in Turkey and Lebanon have also created anxiety among the Syrian refugees who have sought shelter there.
2. The fighting in Syria and western Iraq is intensifying. The Russian air force has intervened, the Assad regime is dropping barrel bombs on residential areas, the U.S.-led coalition is waging intensive airstrikes against the Islamic State, the Turkish army is targeting Kurdish military strongholds, and Iran and Saudi Arabia are sponsoring their respective militias. Millions of Syrians are internally displaced. Eighty percent of them rely on humanitarian aid, which in many cases cannot reach them. Tens of thousands of refugees are stranded at the closed borders with Turkey and Jordan.
3. The international coalition against the Islamic State is retaking the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. On the ground the Iraqi army, as well as Kurdish and Shiite militias, are

fighting, with support from U.S.-led air strikes. The Islamic State burns oil fields, destroys and mines areas, and kills and uses the local population as so-called “human shields.” The United Nations is preparing its aid organizations to try to help thousands of refugees.

4. The Islamic State and the Taliban are stepping up their attacks and assaults in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
5. Tens of thousands of refugees and migrants from West, Central and East Africa are coming to Europe via Libya and the Mediterranean. Islamist organizations such as Boko Haram in the Sahara region and the al-Shabab militants in the Horn of Africa are engaged in human smuggling.
6. The civil war continues in Yemen, where 80 percent of the country’s 27 million residents live in poverty and government institutions barely function. Many Yemenis are refugees in their own country, while others have fled to East Africa.
7. The United Nations is also focused on the Gaza Strip, where 1.8 million Palestinians live in an area of about 140 square miles, twice the size of Washington, DC. The social and environmental situation is so precarious that the region could be unlivable by 2020,³ and half of Gazans say they would leave the region if they could.⁴

Social Issues Exacerbate the Conflict

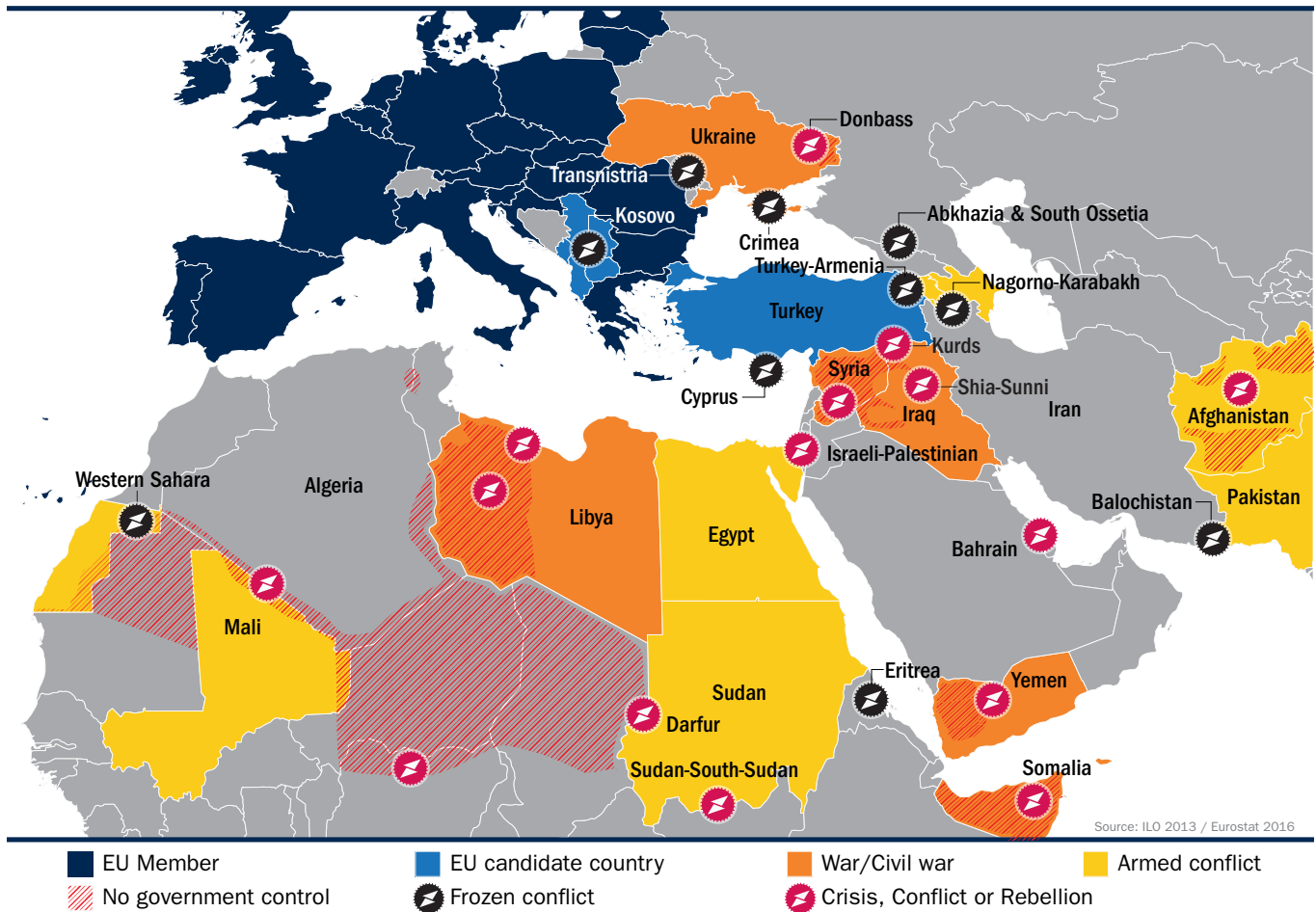
In addition to these conflicts and wars, almost the entire region lacks key components needed for successful development and modernization. According to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2016), the MENA region lags in social peace and cohesion, economic competitiveness, jobs, a social safety net for broad sections of the population, good governance, inclusive and modern education systems, and opportunities for citizens to participate in politics and civil society.

In 2008, many Iranians called attention to these fundamental deficits in the protest movement known as the “Green Movement,” and people in many Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman and Syria) did the same in 2011 under the banner “We demand dignity, liberty and work.”

Protest movements known as the “Arab Revolution,” “Arab Spring” or “Arab Rebellion” ousted longtime rulers in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen. So far, only Tunisia has succeeded in a peaceful transformation, with an exemplary constitution, free and fair elections, and freedom of expression. The other states have either slid into civil war (such as Libya, Syria and Yemen) or the old elites have been restored to power.

Deficits in legitimacy and modernization in most countries in the region remain. The United Nations Arab Human Development report and various scientific indices have

Conflicts and Crises from Eurasia to Africa



underscored the sluggishness in social, political and economic reforms since the 1990s. In the latest assessments of the World Bank, World Economic Forum, Transparency International, Freedom House, Social Progress and the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, most countries in the MENA region perform poorly.

At the same time, the demographic trends in the region are alarming: societies are getting younger and far too few educational opportunities and jobs exist. According to a recent study by the Berlin Institute for Population and Development on the demographic and employment trends in the Arab world, the situation is likely to worsen, because the working-age segment of the population is growing significantly more rapidly than the number of jobs available.⁵ In this scenario, only 40 percent of the employable workforce would be able to find a job at all, and high school and university degrees (more than 33 percent hold diplomas) no longer guarantee employment. The region has the lowest rate of working women worldwide, thus limiting the potential for growth. In the next 15 years,

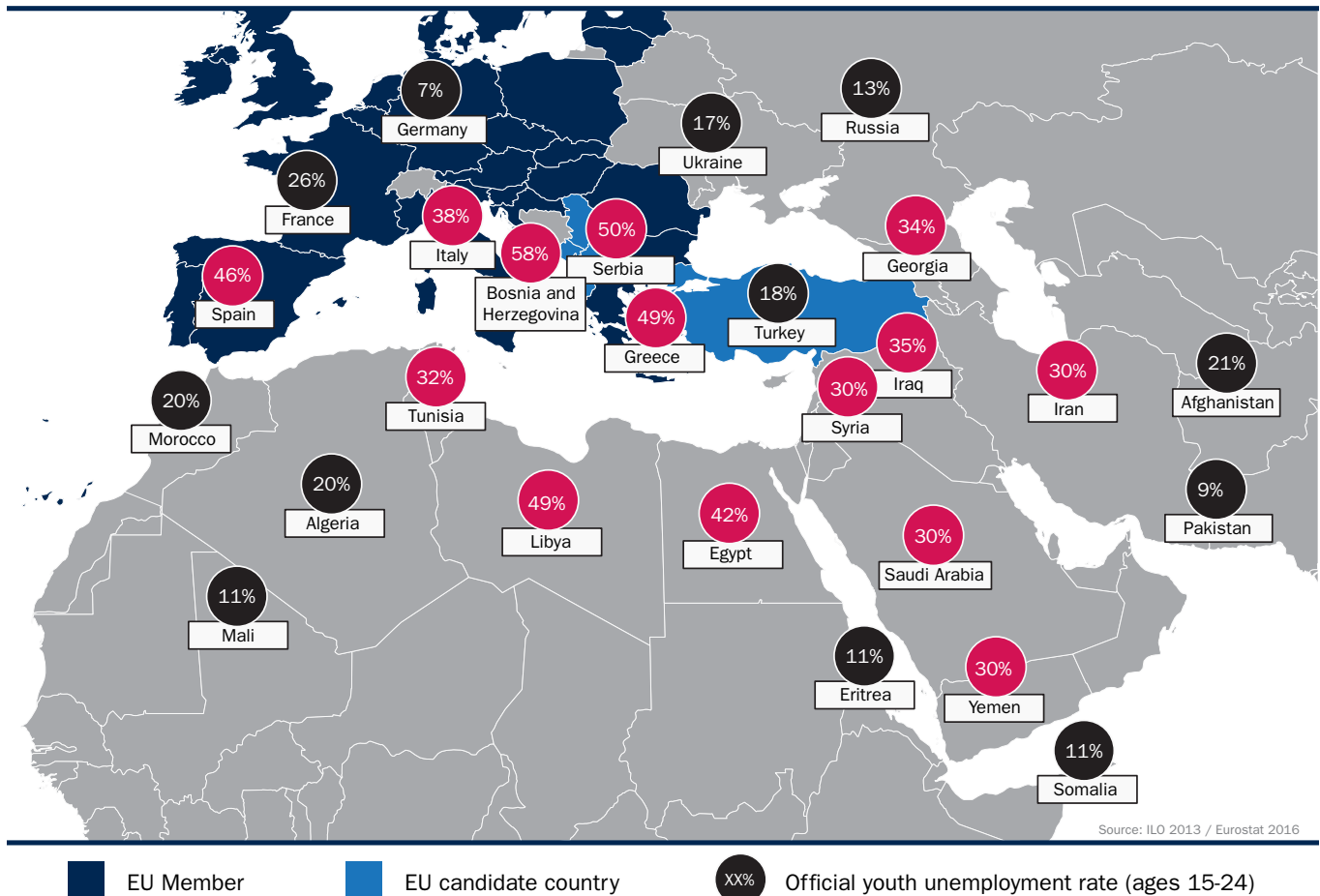
nearly 5 million workers will join the labor market annually. If they lack sufficient prospects for the future, the potential for protest against the ruling elites—and therefore for political instability—may grow, as will the readiness to flee or migrate to more prosperous countries.

In light of this complex, socioeconomic challenge, Jan Völkel, coordinator for the Middle East regions at the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, has warned that various governments will expand their repressive state apparatuses, continue to paint a horror scenario of proliferating Islamism, and use the fight against terror as a pretext to justify surveillance and oppression.⁶

Europe's Southern Neighbor

The MENA region is Europe's immediate neighbor to the south. Increasingly, its problems and challenges have become a part of European and German domestic policy, as the region's conflicts play out among immigrant communities in German streets and on social media.

Youth Unemployment from Eurasia to Africa



War and conflict in the Middle East have also led to pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian demonstrations in public squares and often cruel invective on the internet. Conflict in southeastern Turkey has prompted pro-Turkish and pro-Kurdish reactions. In particular, the failed military coup in Turkey in July 2016 has divided Turkish immigrant communities in Germany into two camps—for and against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The hundreds of thousands of Syrians and Iraqis who fled to Europe and Germany have brought their experiences of war and flight into the immediate neighborhoods and consciousness of every German citizen. Germany's welcoming stance and broad civic engagement have run up against a protest movement that is most visibly embodied by the right-wing Alternative for Germany Party (AfD), which holds more than 15 percent of seats in four German state parliaments and is gaining support.

The AfD also benefits from a rekindled debate over Islam. With the recent refugees, clearly more Muslims have joined

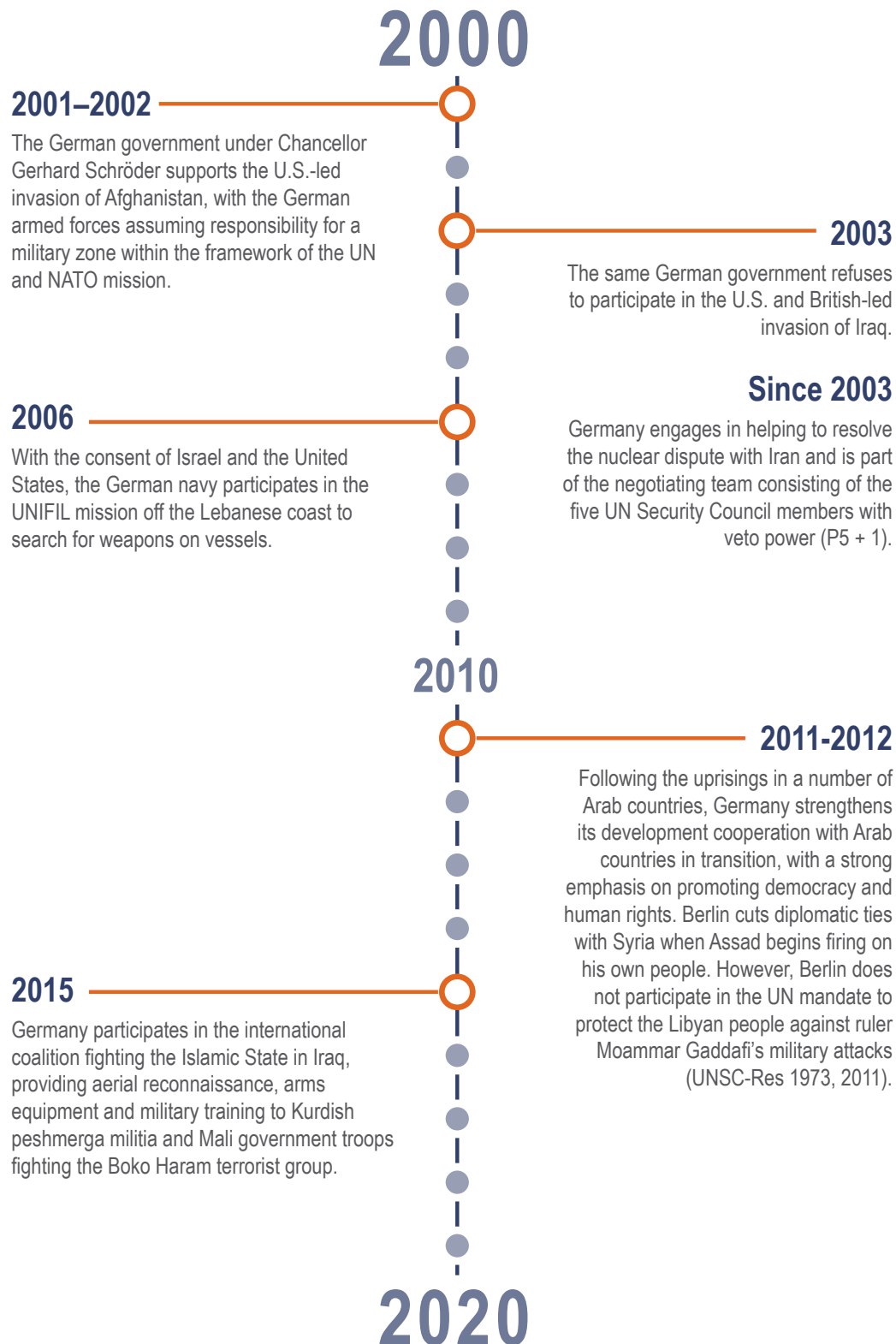
German society (more than 4 million Muslims in a population of 82 million Germans). Their arrival, coinciding with the rise of Islamic State terrorism, has triggered a heated debate in parts of society over whether Islam "belongs" in Germany. Many people's fears of things new and foreign also raise questions about Germany's global role. Some argue that the country should isolate itself, close its borders, or even leave the EU— notions that run counter to all social, economic and political reason, but are, nevertheless, fodder for many populists.

Mainstream German politicians and the public are acting and responding with sensitivity and understanding to challenges posed by the Middle East and North Africa.

Germany's Engagement in the MENA Region

Germany's current relationship with the MENA region is deeply connected to its history. Until reunification, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) kept a low-profile vis-à-vis the MENA region and concentrated almost exclusively on Israel and Turkey— providing support for Israel in acknowledging

German Involvement in the Middle East (2001-Present)



the crimes of the Holocaust, and cooperating with Turkey in light of the hundreds of thousands of Turkish migrant workers who came to the FRG during the 1960s. The former FRG also kept its distance from the Arab states because many of them had established diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which until the end of the 1960s precluded diplomatic relations between the FRG and those countries. Only in 1979, after the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, did the FRG pursue closer ties with Arab nations, starting with Egypt. With the Oslo

Accords between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993-94, reunified Germany also turned its attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has since engaged in the Palestinian territories through cooperation projects and development of administrative and social structures. In the wake of globalization and Germany's growing economic strength, its alliance partners in the EU and NATO have increasingly pressed Berlin to more actively engage in the MENA region, politically and even militarily.

Core Principles of Germany's MENA Policy

The core principles of Germany's MENA policy are reflected in the November 2013 coalition agreement between the two major people's parties, the center-right Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), which share power in the current German government (in office from December 2013 to fall 2017). The agreement contains the following statements on the MENA region:

"Turkey is of strategic and economic importance to Europe ... We would like to further strengthen relations between the European Union and Turkey, including close strategic cooperation on foreign and security policy issues ... If the EU is unable to admit Turkey or Turkey is unable to fully and entirely meet all the obligations associated with membership, then Turkey will have to be linked as closely as possible to European structures, in such a way that enables its privileged relationship to the EU and Germany to develop further ...

The **neighboring countries** along the southern and eastern **Mediterranean** coast are of strategic importance to Europe. Closer links between these states and the EU can contribute to a stabilization of the region.

... We want joint European missions for preserving and strengthening Europe's security to be conducted predominately within our geographical neighborhood. Missions beyond this neighborhood should increasingly be turned over to **regional partners** and organizations, such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the Gulf Cooperation Council ...

We affirm Germany's special responsibility to **Israel** as a Jewish and democratic state and to its security. Israel's right to exist and its security are non-negotiable for us ... Germany and Europe have an enormous interest in peace and stability in the Middle East. Our goal is a two-state solution, with a state of Israel within recognized and permanently secure borders and an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security.

We support the transformative processes in those **Arab states** where there are signs of positive development toward democracy and social pluralism ... Religious minorities must be able to practice their faiths freely and be protected against violence ...

Germany, together with its partners, will play an active part in finding a political solution to the **conflict in Syria** ... Together with the UNHCR, we will lobby other EU member states to participate in a joint European initiative for accepting Syrian refugees.

We call on **Iran** to dispel any doubts about the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program ... Our goal is to regain Iran as a trustworthy partner on the international stage ...

Our security policy commitment in **Afghanistan** will change after more than 10 years. We will strive through interagency engagement to achieve a stable future for Afghanistan. The ISAF combat mission in Afghanistan is to be concluded by the end of 2014 and the military capability will have to be maintained until that time to safeguard the withdrawal. ..."⁷

On the whole, the principles outlined in the coalition agreement are also shared by the Free Democratic Party (which is not represented in the Bundestag) the Green Party and some in the Left Party.

However, since 2014-15, differences of opinion on some issues and legislation pertaining to the MENA region have grown both between the parties and within individual parties. For example:

The German government is seeking to designate the North African countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia “safe” countries in order to be able to expedite the asylum applications from those countries and more quickly repatriate people originating from there. This legislation requires the consent of the Bundesrat, Germany’s upper house of parliament, where Green Party votes are needed. The Greens reject this third-state principle, pointing to human rights violations in North Africa.

Germany is the world’s fourth largest arms exporter after the United States, Russia and China. Reports of impending arms sales to Algeria, Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have led to protests from the public, the Left and Green parties, and a growing number of Social Democratic members of parliament. Opponents of arms exports argue that the autocrats who rule these countries are likely to use the German weapons against their own people.

The German armed forces is a parliamentary army, meaning the Bundestag must approve any mission of the German army. Only the Left Party rejects, on principle, the deployment of the German armed forces in peace missions and training projects in the MENA region. The party believes that no military engagement can contribute to conflict resolution.

Germany’s MENA policy dilemma of balancing its various interests—establishing security, strengthening exports, promoting democracy and human rights, and engaging in conflict resolution and the fight against terror—can best be seen in the example of Egypt under general-turned-president Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi. On the one hand, Egypt is a critical country—Israeli-Egyptian security cooperation is important and German companies do not want to lose an export market with 100 million citizens. On the other hand, Egypt has major deficits in democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and has been reluctant to cooperate on the issues of refugees and forming a Libyan unity government. While the Ministry of Economic Affairs, led by SPD Chairman Sigmar Gabriel, is openly focused on engaging with Egypt’s el-Sisi, the SPD-led Foreign Office and the CSU-led Ministry of Development are more inclined to keep their distance. The Green Party in particular is critical of el-Sisi. In the past, Germany’s liberal Free Democratic Party has been the most proactive in working to improve export opportunities for German industry.

Support for Multilateral Solutions

In the July 2016 issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier wrote: “Whenever possible, we choose Recht (law) over Macht (power). As a result, Germany emphasizes the need for legitimacy in supranational decision-making and invests in UN-led multilateralism. ... Germany will continue to frame its international posture primarily in civilian and diplomatic terms and will resort to military engagement only after weighing every risk and every possible alternative. ... Germany will be a responsible, restrained and reflective leader, guided in chief by its European instincts.”⁸

Thus, the majority of German decision-makers will continue to respond to wars and conflicts in the MENA region primarily by seeking political solutions. To be able to conduct serious negotiations and implement sustainable agreements, Berlin is convinced that stronger political and multilateral engagement will be needed from the new U.S. administration. This is because Russia and China play an ever-greater role in the Middle East. Important regional powers such as Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan are more apt to listen to Washington than to Brussels. Even though Germany and Europe have taken on more responsibility in their immediate neighborhood, U.S. military clout is still far greater in the Mediterranean and Gulf region, and cannot realistically be replaced by European forces.

Berlin strongly concurs with the recent recommendation of an Atlantic Council working group headed by Madeleine Albright and Stephen Hadley that “in Iraq and Syria, the United States must lead—and must do considerably more. ... Europe must take the lead in Libya, albeit with considerable American backing.”⁹

In light of the civil war in Syria and the conflicts in Iraq, an important joint diplomatic project for Germany, the European Union and the new U.S. administration could be to work toward a regional security architecture, even if President-elect Donald Trump seems hesitant to engage beyond the fight against terrorism.

Steinmeier went on to argue in his *Foreign Affairs* article that Germany is not “shying away from the responsibility to help construct a new security architecture in the region. ... Europe’s history offers some useful lessons here. The 1975 Helsinki conference helped overcome the continent’s Cold War-era divisions through the creation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. If regional players choose to look at that example, they will find useful lessons that might assist them in addressing their current conflicts.”¹⁰

Even though Saudi Arabia and Iran broke off diplomatic relations in January 2016, a rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran is indispensable, not only to draw closer to peace in

Syria, but also to de-escalate, or even resolve, related conflicts in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

A system of security and cooperation in the Gulf region could emerge from the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), composed of representatives of 17 countries brought together by U.S. and Russian foreign ministers following the nuclear agreement with Iran in fall 2015. The ISSG, whose mission is to advance a cease-fire and negotiation process for Syria, did manage to break a stalemate (but only between fall 2015 and spring 2016) and convince all five countries with veto power on the UN Security Council to adopt a joint resolution on Syria (UNSC-Res 2268 and 2254). However, there is still no comprehensive cease-fire in Syria or any serious negotiations underway, as the various parties and stakeholders in the conflict buy time to advance their own interests, calculating they will have to be more open to compromise once the new U.S. administration is fully up and running.

If, as is currently the case, Washington does not bring its full diplomatic weight to bear, then what will again plainly be needed is a genuine EU foreign, peace, development and security policy that, despite Brexit, is supported by all 27 member states. Germany is not willing or able to fill this gap alone, especially when it comes to overcoming the myriad challenges in the MENA region.

Germany is already leading the way in addressing the Syrian-Iraqi refugee crisis in the Middle East. The United Kingdom, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the United Nations co-hosted a donor conference in London on February 4, 2016 to raise significant new funding to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of those affected. The conference raised more than \$12 billion in pledges—\$6 billion for 2016 and a further \$6.1 billion for 2017-20 to enable partners to plan ahead. Since then, Berlin and its conference partners have been pressing at every diplomatic level to equip all international aid organizations with sufficient financial and technical means and to provide Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and northern Iraq with comprehensive assistance to manage the refugee influx.

For all the attention focused on the issue of security and refugees, one of the main reasons for these problems is that the calls of the young protesters in the Arab world in 2011 still have not been heard. They desire dignity, food, jobs, freedom and more inclusion in economic and political life.¹¹ This is also an important challenge for trans-Atlantic development cooperation: to truly join forces and coordinate support projects in an effort to achieve more impact.

Four Central Recommendations

1. In many countries, young people are visibly taking their fate into their own hands. They are establishing start-ups, small businesses and nongovernmental organizations. They are engaging in the media, political parties

and associations. Most are navigating their own way, working without drawing much attention. Many are taking risk in stride, landing behind bars, like Saudi blogger Raif Badawi, whom the European Parliament honored with the Sakharov Prize in 2015.

Recommendation: When these pioneers and young entrepreneurs ask for foreign assistance, they should receive support through Western development cooperation. Furthermore, we must not abandon them and their projects when authoritarian regimes take action against them.

2. In addition to humanitarian aid, sustainable development policy plays a pivotal role in the countries neighboring Syria affected by the refugees, specifically Turkey, northern Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

Households headed by Syrian women present a special social challenge. In Jordan, for example, one in three Syrian refugee families is led by a single woman. Because the men have remained in Syria or have been killed, the female heads of household must find means to survive beyond the assistance available to them in neighboring countries.

Recommendation: One exemplary project of the German development cooperation agency, GIZ, offers training in practical vocations, such as plumbing. To relieve social tensions with the Jordanian neighbors, the GIZ has enabled Syrian and Jordanian women to participate in vocational training; some have already established their own plumbing businesses. Many women would like to learn additional skilled trades.

3. As discussed earlier, to date, Tunisia remains the only revolutionary Arab country that is advancing relatively peacefully toward democracy, a social market economy and the rule of law. However, Tunisia is still plagued by attacks, economic crisis and stalled reforms. The 2015 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Tunisia's union leaders, entrepreneurs, legal advocates and human rights activists should inspire further progress.

Recommendation: The Tunisian government and civil society wish to work together with Europe, which is not the case in many Arab nations. Thus, Tunisia offers an excellent basis for Germany, Europe and the United States to approach the problems of security, unemployment and the rule of law in a coordinated and more effective manner, through well-coordinated development cooperation.

4. Conference for Security and Cooperation in the Gulf Region—An Alternative to War in the MENA Region. A regional model for negotiation may offer a peaceful alternative. First, countries of the Gulf state subregion—Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar

and Oman, as well as Iraq and Yemen (after forming a functioning government)—come to the table. Later, the regional powers Turkey, Israel and Egypt follow.

The regional dialogue occurs on two levels. At the political level, the parties discuss the fight against terrorism, the future of Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and relations among Iran, Saudi Arabia and the smaller GCC states. On a practical level, they should negotiate concrete terms for infrastructure projects, environmental protection measures, trade issues, energy cooperation and refugee aid—thereby building trust.

In principle, this conflict resolution mechanism is modeled on the successful Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), adapted for the Gulf region and dubbed “CSC Gulf” in July 2015 by Christian Koch of the Gulf Research Center and Christian Hanelt of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Forty-one years ago, the Final Act of the CSCE was signed at Helsinki and the conference later evolved into an institution, the OSCE, headquartered in Vienna. After the end of the Cold War, the OSCE still has not lost its relevance, as can be seen in its conflict management in eastern Ukraine.

Objectively speaking, the regional powers Iran and Saudi Arabia would need to settle their conflicts at the negotiating table in order to establish a basis for cooperation. The two countries will be able to create more of the jobs they need for their youth only if they trade with each other and build industries together.

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