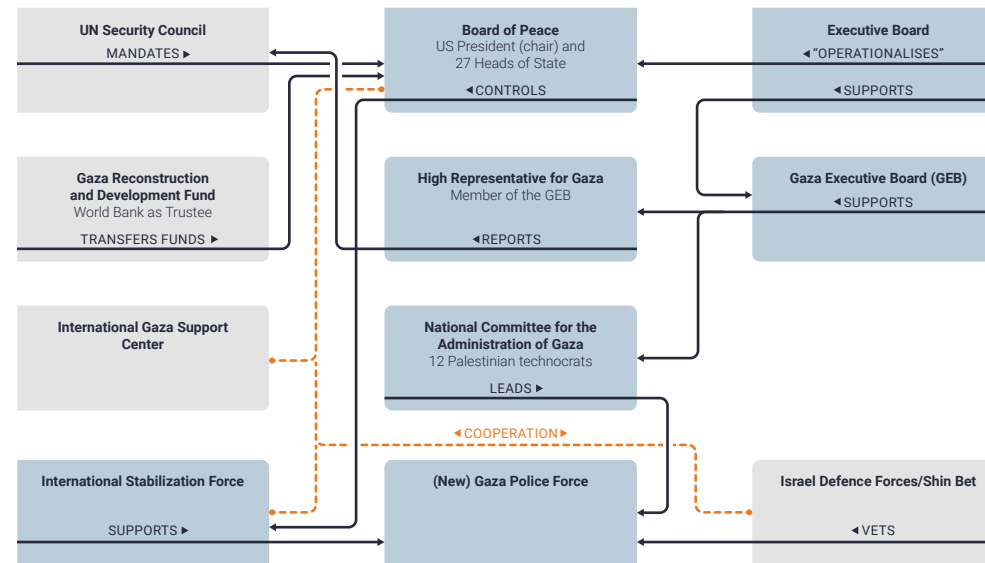


When Hamas attacked Israel on 07 October 2023, the situation escalated dramatically. Israel responded with a ground offensive in the Gaza Strip, in September 2024 expanded the conflict to southern Lebanon following strikes, and, together with the United States, waged a 12- day war against Iran in June 2025. As a result, the political and conflict landscape has shifted significantly. A US-led Board of Peace for Gaza has been established; the EU is adjusting its engagement; the UN has withdrawn its mission from Iraq and is discussing the future of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which has been contributing to stabilisation in southern Lebanon since 1978. From closure to reconfiguration of the UN presence – or even a new parallel EU mission in Lebanon – a number of options currently appear possible, though much remains uncertain.

Board of Peace for Gaza – Key Actors



Sources: White House Statement on the Board of Peace, World Bank Group, UN Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025)

This dashboard illustrates, on the one hand, how comprehensive the existing international engagement in the region already is. On the other hand, it describes developments and raises open questions that will be particularly relevant in the

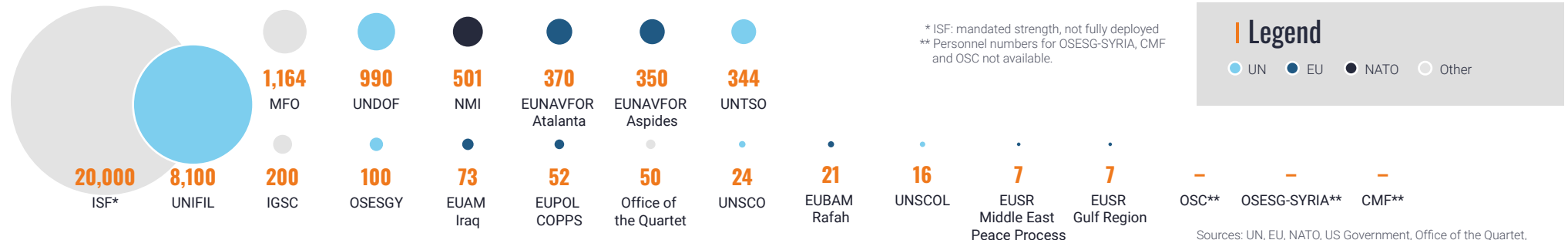
ongoing restructuring phase. It thus provides facts and insights intended to enrich German foreign policy deliberations as well as planning processes in Brussels and New York.

Multilateral Engagement and Stabilisation

Since the Hamas attack on Israel in 2023 and the ensuing war in Gaza, and given the current violent clashes between Iran, Hezbollah, the United States and Israel, a return to calm in the region seems a long way off. It is therefore all the more important that stabilisation and security remain at the centre of international efforts.

Despite justified criticism, the structure mandated by the UN Security Council – comprising the Board of Peace, the International Stabilization Force and a High Representative – plays the key role, at least until the mandate expires in December 2027, in implementing the 20-point plan. This calls, among other things, for the disarmament of Hamas and the establishment of a new police force for the Gaza Strip as well as improved provision of basic services to the population and long-term reconstruction. So far, neither the ISF nor the new Gaza police force are operational. What is clear, too, is that neither wants to be responsible for disarming Hamas. Given their long-standing cooperation with Palestinian security agencies, the two EU missions could play a central role in rebuilding the police force but are as yet not involved.

Operations by Number of Personnel



Sources: UN, EU, NATO, US Government, Office of the Quartet, German Armed Forces as of July 2026

A New EU Mission in Lebanon

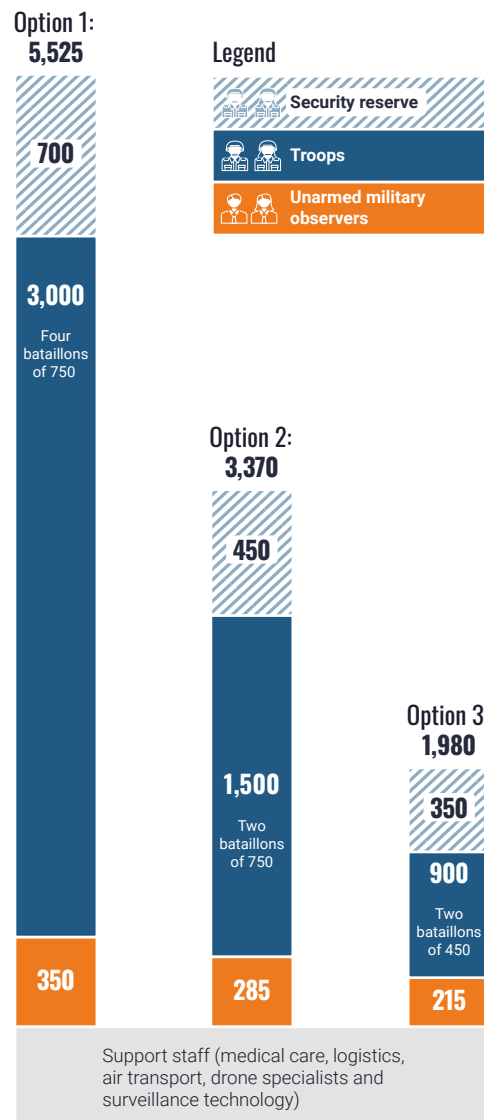
A newly planned EU mission for Lebanon could also make an important contribution to stabilising the situation. In the summer of 2026, planning is ongoing for an EU civil-military mission that – complementing a possible new UN presence – could strengthen the Lebanese state, including its police and its military so that they can assume security responsibilities in the south of the country in place of the Hezbollah militia. In part, security and stabilisation will depend on the course charted by the Israeli government (and the outcome of the Knesset elections), as well as on whether Hamas and Hezbollah can be successfully disarmed, demobilised and reintegrated (DDR). DDR entails protracted and challenging processes that the UN has already overseen in many post-conflict contexts, albeit with mixed results.

The New UN Operation in Lebanon

On 01 June 2026, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres presented the UN Security Council with three options for a future UN presence in Lebanon following the expiration of UNIFIL's mandate at the end of December 2026. These options differ primarily in the size of the successor mission, and all consist of four components: unarmed military observers, troops, a security reserve and support staff. Their total strength is 5,525, 3,370 and 1,980 personnel, respectively.

The available resources clearly have an impact on the tasks the mission can carry out. A mission based on Option One could cover the entire region between the Blue Line and the Litani River and both monitor compliance with a future ceasefire and support the planned deployment of the Lebanese state security forces to that area. Options Two and Three would be barely capable of doing so, if at all. The central function of a UN presence – to monitor to the activities of the parties to the conflict in southern Lebanon as an impartial

Three follow-on options for UNIFIL



observer and to report violations – would also be jeopardised, particularly if Option Three were chosen.

In addition, Guterres proposed responding to the Lebanese government's request to include a maritime component in the future UN presence. However, given the current political context and the UN's financial constraints, it seems unlikely that this option will be implemented.

Despite the decision in August 2025 to withdraw UNIFIL, member states have voiced their interest in maintaining the UN's supporting role in implementing the 2006 ceasefire agreement in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1701. Moreover, on 14 July 2026, the Security Council received a letter signed by 86 Lebanese parliamentarians calling for the maintenance or even expansion of UNIFIL's presence in southern Lebanon.

Then again, the trilateral framework agreement of 26 June 2026 between Lebanon, Israel, and the United States, which is intended to lead to a comprehensive peace and outlines tasks such as verifying the withdrawal of armed groups, mentions neither Resolution 1701, the UN Security Council, UNIFIL nor its potential successor, but instead refers to a "mutually agreed-upon third-party entity."

Regional Dimensions and Strategic Coherence

The future of ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and wider region – in Gaza, in southern Lebanon and in Iran and the Strait of Hormuz – is completely uncertain. Although ceasefires are in effect everywhere (as of mid-July 2026), they are regularly violated by all parties to the conflict, particularly in Lebanon and Iran. A dramatic escalation is possible at any time – at one of these flashpoints or indeed all three – leading to potential major shifts in the regional balance of power.

Will the United States, following its sobering experiences in the conflict with Iran, withdraw from the region or further expand its involvement? Given its (presumably) strengthened position, will Tehran seek to solidify its "Axis of Resistance" with the Houthis and Hezbollah, or will it put these relationships on hold in the interest of a final agreement with the United States and Israel? Above all, Iran's demand to link a ceasefire with the United States to a parallel resolution between Israel and Hezbollah poses considerable risks – but also presents opportunities.

This uncertainty makes the work of the various multilateral engagements – which are deployed on the ground with very different mandates and resources to contribute to de-escalation and stabilisation – extremely complex. At present, it is unclear how they are supposed to achieve political and strategic coherence in this complicated mix of different actors and conflicting interests. But this is precisely a proven factor for success in multilateral engagement: a more or less coherent political process around which a critical mass of actors on the ground can rally is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable stabilisation. As a prominent member state of the UN, the EU and NATO, Germany has the opportunity to make an important contribution here.

SPOTLIGHT

Multilateral Operations in the Region 2026

| Israel/Palestinian Territories

● **United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)**

Since 05/1948

UN's first peacekeeping mission, monitors ceasefires and supervises armistice agreements in the Middle East, helping to prevent escalation and supporting other UN peacekeeping operations in the region.

● **Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO)** Since 10/1999

Coordinate UN activities related to the Middle East peace process and support negotiations and mobilise international support aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

● **EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP)** Since 11/1996

Provide an active contribution to the final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution, in line with the UNSCR 2334 (2016) in close contact with all parties in the peace process, the United Nations and other relevant organisations such as the League of Arab States.

■ **Office of the Quartet (OQ)** Since 2002

Help mediate Middle East peace negotiations and support Palestinian economic development and institution building. The Quartet consists of the UN, the EU, the USA and Russia.

■ **Office of the Security Coordinator (OSC)** Since 03/2005

Build the capacity of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces and facilitate security coordination between the PASF and the Israel Defence Forces. (US-led, multi-country security assistance mission).

● **EU Border Assistance Mission to Rafah (EUBAM Rafah)** Since 11/2005

Provide a neutral third-party presence at the Rafah Crossing Point, supporting the implementation of the Agreement on

Movement and Access between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

● **EU Mission for the Support of Palestinian Police and Rule of Law (EUPOL COPPS)** Since 01/2006

Assist the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of a future Palestinian state, focused on security and justice sector reforms under Palestinian ownership and in line with European and international standards.

■ **International Stabilization Force (ISF)** Since 11/2025

Provide security, train a new Gaza police force, and oversee the demilitarisation and redevelopment of the Gaza Strip (UN-mandated multinational force under the Gaza peace plan).

■ **International Gaza Support Center (IGSC)** Since 10/2025

Support stabilisation efforts, monitor the ceasefire agreement and help facilitate the flow of humanitarian, logistical and security assistance into Gaza (led by U.S. Central Command with partner countries, non-governmental organisations, international organisations and the private sector).

| Lebanon

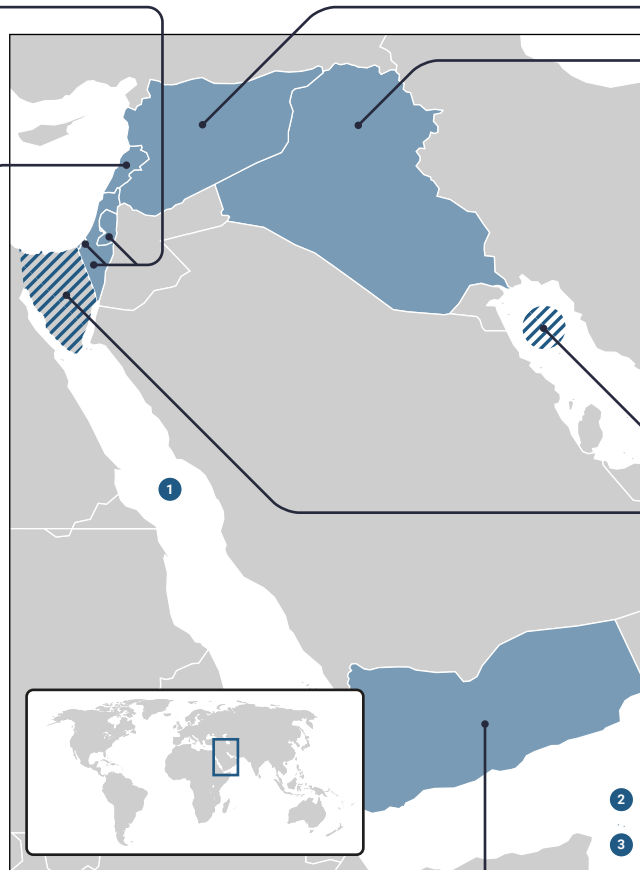
● **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)**

Since 03/1978

Confirm Israeli withdrawal and restore stability in southern Lebanon, monitor the cessation of hostilities, support the deployment of Lebanese armed forces, and help ensure humanitarian access and the safe return of displaced civilians.

● **Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL)** Since 02/2007

Represent the Secretary-General and coordinate the work of the United Nations in Lebanon following the July 2006 war.



Sources: UN, EU, NATO, US Government, Office of the Quartet

| Yemen

● **United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) Yemen** 01/2019 – 03/2026

Support the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement in the city of Hudaydah and ports of Hudaydah Salif and Ras Issa. As of 01 April 2026, UN support to peace efforts in Yemen continues under the leadership of OSESGY.

● **Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen (OSESGY)** Since 06/2012

Enable the resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly, Yemeni-led political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people, as set out in the 2011 Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference.

| Iraq

● **EU Advisory Mission in Iraq (EUAM Iraq)** Since 10/2017

Advise Iraqi authorities on civilian security sector reform, supporting coherent implementation of the civilian-related aspects of Iraq's National Security Strategy.

✦ **NATO Mission Iraq (NMI)** Since 10/2018

Assist Iraq in building more sustainable, transparent and effective armed forces and security institutions through advice and capacity-building, to stabilise Iraq and prevent the return of ISIS/Daesh.

| Egypt/Sinai

■ **Multinational Force and Observers (MFO)** Since 04/1982

Supervise the implementation of the security provisions of the 1979 Treaty of Peace between Israel and Egypt and use its best efforts to prevent any violations of its terms (multinational coalition).

| Maritime Missions

● **EU Naval Force Aspidos (EUNAVFOR ASPIDES)** Since 02/2024

Protect vessels and safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and surrounding waters, in response to repeated Houthi attacks on international shipping.

● **EU Naval Force Operation Somalia (EUNAVFOR ATALANTA)** Since 12/2008

Contribute to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast, while protecting World Food Programme vessels delivering humanitarian aid and monitoring fishing activities in the region.

| Syria

● **United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)**

Since 05/1974

Supervise the ceasefire and the disengagement agreement between Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan Heights, overseeing the separation of forces and ensuring stability in the region.

● **Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSESG-SYRIA)** Since 07/2014

Support a Syrian-led political process, facilitating negotiations on governance, constitutional reform and UN-supervised elections, while promoting a ceasefire and humanitarian access.

| Gulf Region

● **EU Special Representative for the Gulf Region** Since 06/2022

Further develop a stronger, comprehensive and more strategic EU partnership with the countries in the Gulf region as well as contribute to the stability of the region by engaging and supporting dialogue and long-term regional solutions with individual Gulf partners and relevant regional organisations.

■ **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)** Since 02/2002

Uphold the international rules-based order by countering illicit non-state actors on the high seas and promoting security, stability and prosperity of critical international shipping lanes (multinational naval partnership).

| Legend

- UN Peacekeeping Operations
- UN Special Political Missions
- EU Missions & Operations
- ✦ NATO Operations
- Other Configurations