

Strategic Risks of Endorsing Israeli Strikes on Iran

A View from the Gulf and Arab Street

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June 2025

1. Summary

As the European Union considers its posture toward the ongoing Israeli strikes on Iran, this briefing provides a critical assessment of how EU alignment with such actions is perceived in Gulf and broader Arab societies. The intent is not to moralize, but to outline with precision the reputational, geopolitical, and domestic security risks that may arise from supporting or legitimizing a campaign many in the region view as unjustified and destabilizing.

2. Perception in the Arab and Gulf Streets

Across Arab capitals — from Kuwait and Doha to Amman, Cairo, and Tunis — the prevailing sentiment is one of deep unease. Even among traditionally pro-Western constituencies, the endorsement or passive approval of Israeli strikes on Iran is viewed as:

- **A dangerous normalization of preemptive warfare** by a state that already acts with considerable impunity in Gaza and the West Bank.
- **A continuation of colonial-era exceptionalism** where international law is applied selectively — harshly for the weak, leniently for the powerful.
- **A betrayal of Europe's moral credibility**, especially as EU leaders emphasize human rights, dialogue, and rules-based order in other theatres.

While governments may exercise restraint in their official statements, **public sentiment is intensifying**, amplified by independent media, digital platforms, and pan-Islamic networks.

3. Strategic Repercussions for Europe

A. Reputational Damage

- Europe risks forfeiting its unique position as a potential mediator. Unlike the U.S., the EU has long been viewed in the Arab world as a more balanced actor. This perception is eroding.
- The youth in the Arab world, a demographic force, increasingly view Europe as complicit in a double standard: opposing Russia's strikes in Ukraine, yet excusing Israeli bombardments that mirror those tactics.

B. Domestic Security and Societal Tension

- Endorsing or materially supporting escalation may trigger unrest not only abroad, but **within European cities**. Communities with Arab and Muslim heritage will feel betrayed, potentially fueling alienation and extremism.
- Intelligence services must consider the risk of retaliatory attacks by non-state actors operating under the narrative of "defending the oppressed."

C. Economic Blowback

- Escalation with Iran risks further instability in global energy markets. Gulf producers may resist EU pressure on output or pricing if Europe is seen as party to aggression.
- Trade corridors (e.g., Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal) could face disruption, directly impacting European imports, insurance costs, and supply chains.

4. The Iran-Israel Nuclear Asymmetry: A Source of Rage

Public discourse across Arab societies consistently highlights the following:

- **Israel possesses undeclared nuclear weapons**, violates multiple UN resolutions, and maintains a policy of occupation and siege.
- **Iran, though far from innocent, is punished preemptively** for a capability it does not yet possess.

This double standard reinforces the perception that **the international order remains colonial in structure**: one law for allies, another for adversaries.

Europe, by aligning with this asymmetry, becomes associated with its consequences.

5. Policy Recommendation: Strategic De-escalation

- Use Europe's diplomatic capital to restrain further escalation. Call for ceasefire, investigation, and structured dialogue under international auspices.
- Avoid public endorsements of military actions whose legality is questionable and whose humanitarian toll is immense.
- Reaffirm Europe's commitment to international law — uniformly applied — or risk becoming a party to its erosion.

6. Final Note

This is not merely a regional war. Its reverberations are global: psychological, economic, and political. If Europe is to uphold its vision of a multipolar, lawful, and peaceful world order, it must resist the logic of alignment and instead act as a brake on escalation.

There is still time to make diplomacy credible again. But it begins with restraint — and with listening.