France's Gulf Moment: Between Momentum and Commitment

by Souhire Medini **(/experts/souhire-medini)**

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Souhire Medini (/experts/souhire-medini)
Souhire Medini is a 2024-26 Visiting Fellow at The Washington Institute, currently in residence from the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

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To solidify its position as the preferred European security partner in the region, Paris will have to demonstrate that its commitments are reliable in the long run.

The following is an excerpt from an essay originally published in Beyond Washington: Gulf Partnerships Under Review **(https://orfme.org/research/beyond-washington-gulf-partnerships-under-review/)** *, a special report by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF). To read the full essay, download the PDF on this page.*

Operation Epic Fury found European and Gulf states, both allies of Washington, sharing a common approach. They sought to counter Iran's attacks while maintaining a defensive posture by refusing to participate in US and Israeli military operations—a challenging tension to navigate. This convergence was evident as early as 5 March 2026, in a meeting between European ministers and their counterparts from the Gulf Cooperation Council. Since then, a situation of "neither war nor full peace" has intermittently exposed the Gulf countries to attacks from Iranian missiles and drones. This new reality is likely to reinforce the Gulf countries' willingness to diversify their partnerships by adding 'layers' to their protection architecture. However, neither European nor GCC countries aim to diminish the US's engagement in the region. Instead, their objective is to encourage Washington to use its power and influence in a way that accounts for their own interests. Against this backdrop, France may have emerged from the war as the natural leader for a deeper Europe-Gulf strategic partnership... ❖

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