

## Constructing Crisis, Solidarity, and Legitimacy in Multilateral Diplomatic Discourse: A Discourse-Historical Analysis of the Extraordinary GCC–EU Ministerial Meeting on Iran’s Attacks (March 2026)

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بناء الأزمات والتضامن والشرعية في الخطاب الدبلوماسي متعدد الأطراف: تحليل تاريخي خطابي للاجتماع الوزاري

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### Abstract

The focus of this research is on the crisis, legitimacy, threat and bloc solidarity constructs within the co-authored formal discourse associated with the extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and European Union (EU) held in response to a series of coordinated military attacks by Iran on GCC nations on the 5th of March 2026. Utilising the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) in conjunction with Critical Discourse Analysis, and employing van Dijk’s (2008) sociocognitive, contextual model of analysis, the examination consists of a closed, two tiered bilingual Arabic-English corpus between the period of October 2023-March 2026. The central research artefact is the extraordinary GCC-EU Joint Statement (C1), with three prior communiqués (C2-C4) serving as a diachronic baseline. The nine part DHA analytical framework is applied across four levels of context and supplemented by a corpus assisted heuristic layer. The analysis contained within the bounded scope of the corpus found that Iran is portrayed as a state-level hostile through a clear method of naming and is subjected to a uniform and extreme negative portrayal. Additionally, the solidarity of the GCC–EU bloc works as an accomplishment of the discursive genre of joint announcements, and does not pre-exist as a political reality. The creation of legitimacy occurs through the layering of discourse from separate discursive registers of legal, humanitarian, and economic-security influenced by Article 51 of the UN Charter. The simultaneous mobilization of deterrence and dialogue creates a dual-track diplomatic framework where previously agreed-upon commitments between the GCC–EU are then recontextualized as past act of reluctance. The interface of the two languages indicates that the Arabic and English versions are not identical forms of evaluation; rather, they are identical in form and perform parallel but separate forms of evaluative work. This study contributes on both an empirical level of opening the currently underexamined institutional archive of the GCC–EU; on a theoretical level, it makes connections between DHA and the theory

of sociocognitive context; and on a methodological level, it creates an analytical approach that combines diachronic recontextualization analysis, cross-genre comparison, and bilingual corpus-supported analysis, in one study..**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis; Discourse-Historical Approach; diplomatic discourse; GCC-EU relations; crisis communication; legitimation; recontextualization; bilingual corpus analysis

## المخلص

يركز هذا البحث على بُنى الأزمة، والشرعية، والتهديد، والتضامن بين الكتل السياسية ضمن الخطاب الرسمي المشترك المرتبط بالاجتماع الوزاري الاستثنائي لمجلس التعاون لدول الخليج العربية والاتحاد الأوروبي، الذي عُقد ردًا على سلسلة من الهجمات العسكرية المنسقة التي شنتها إيران على دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي في الخامس من آذار/مارس ٢٠٢٦. يعتمد البحث على المدخل التاريخي للخطاب، بالاقتران مع تحليل الخطاب النقدي، ويوظف نموذج فان دايك (٢٠٠٨) المعرفي-الاجتماعي والسياقي في التحليل. وتتكون الدراسة من مدونة مغلقة ثنائية المستوى وثنائية اللغة، عربية-إنجليزية، تغطي الفترة الممتدة من تشرين الأول/أكتوبر ٢٠٢٣ إلى آذار/مارس ٢٠٢٦. وتمثل وثيقة البيان المشترك الاستثنائي لمجلس التعاون الخليجي والاتحاد الأوروبي (C1) مادة البحث المركزية، بينما تُستخدم ثلاثة بيانات سابقة (C2-C4) بوصفها خطأ أساسًا تاريخيًا للمقارنة. يُطبَّق إطار التحليل التاريخي للخطاب، المكوّن من تسعة أجزاء، عبر أربعة مستويات سياقية، ويُستكمل بطبقة استدلالية مساعدة قائمة على تحليل المدونة. وقد توصل التحليل، ضمن النطاق المحدد للمدونة، إلى أن إيران تُصوّر بوصفها خصمًا على مستوى الدولة من خلال طريقة تسمية واضحة، وتخضع لتصوير سلبي موحد وحاد. إضافة إلى ذلك، يعمل التضامن بين مجلس التعاون الخليجي والاتحاد الأوروبي بوصفه منجزًا للنوع الخطابي للبيانات المشتركة، ولا يوجد مسبقًا بوصفه واقعيًا سياسيًا قائمًا. وتنشأ الشرعية من خلال تراكم الخطاب عبر سجلات خطابية منفصلة: قانونية، وإنسانية، وأمنية-اقتصادية، متأثرة بالمادة ٥١ من ميثاق الأمم المتحدة. كما أن التعبئة المتزامنة للردع والحوار تخلق إطارًا دبلوماسيًا مزدوج المسار، تُعاد فيه موضوعة الالتزامات المتفق عليها سابقًا بين مجلس التعاون الخليجي والاتحاد الأوروبي بوصفها أفعالًا ماضية اتسمت بالتردد. ويشير التفاعل بين اللغتين إلى أن النسختين العربية والإنجليزية ليستا شكلين متطابقين من التقييم؛ بل إنهما متطابقتان في البنية الشكلية، وتؤديان عملاً تقييميًا متوازنًا، لكنه منفصل. وتسهم هذه الدراسة، على المستوى التجريبي، في فتح الأرشيف المؤسسي لمجلس التعاون الخليجي والاتحاد الأوروبي، الذي لم يحظَ بالدرس الكافي حتى الآن. أما على المستوى النظري، فتقيم روابط بين المدخل التاريخي للخطاب ونظرية السياق المعرفي-الاجتماعي. وعلى المستوى المنهجي، تقدم مقاربة تحليلية تجمع، في دراسة واحدة، بين تحليل إعادة السياقة التاريخية، والمقارنة العابرة لأنواع الخطابية، والتحليل ثنائي اللغة المدعوم بالمدونة. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** تحليل الخطاب النقدي؛ المدخل التاريخي للخطاب؛ الخطاب الدبلوماسي؛ علاقات مجلس التعاون الخليجي والاتحاد الأوروبي؛ خطاب الأزمة؛ بناء الشرعية؛ إعادة السياقة؛ تحليل المدونة ثنائية اللغة.

## 1. Introduction

On 28 February 2026, Iran launched coordinated missile and drone attacks against all six GCC member states, targeting civilian infrastructure, oil facilities, and residential areas across the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. The attacks marked the most significant direct military escalation in the Gulf in decades. On 1 March 2026 GCC foreign ministers convened an extraordinary session, followed on 5 March 2026 by an unprecedented extraordinary joint meeting between GCC and EU foreign ministers in Brussels. The co-authored joint statement produced by that meeting — condemning Iran's attacks, invoking the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, reaffirming commitment to regional stability, and calling for diplomatic resolution — constitutes a discursive event of considerable analytical significance. It is not only a record of political positions but a site at which crisis, aggression, legitimacy, solidarity, deterrence, and international order are actively constructed in language. Two structurally different multilateral blocs are the co-authors of the text. The partnership of these two blocs has been formalised by the 1988 Agreement for Cooperation between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Economic Community, and upgraded to summit level in October 2024, was previously a case of routine Ministerial Diplomacy. Now transformed into a crisis-response partnership (i.e. jointly condoning a third-party state, invoking International Legal Frameworks, combining Security with Humanitarian and economic Security language, while still retaining commitment to dialogue), this transformation raises fundamental questions on how Diplomatic Discourse constructs Collective Identity, creates legitimacy and manages the tension between condemnation and restraint. Many studies have shown that display texts issued by institutions do not provide an accurate representation of the political state of affairs, but may be used as instruments for creating and contesting social relations, legitimacy and power (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993, 2008; Wodak, 2001). The Discourse-Historical Approach has offered a particularly productive way of analysing complex, intertextually layered,

political discourse, providing a structured method for tracing how the texts create intertextual links to prior commitments, how they recontextualise earlier examples of the same discourse, and how they use argumentation techniques (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009). Related analyses of the crisis discourse produced by the GCC, of the multilateral discourse used by the GCC and EU members, and of discourse about international law and international humanitarian norms as forms of legitimisation (Chilton, 2004; Hodges, 2011; van Leeuwen, 2007) have all contributed significantly to the knowledge base. Corpus linguistics has also demonstrated its usefulness in helping to establish a more systematic approach to qualitative critical readings of the institutions involved in the production of GCC-EU institutional discourse (Baker et al., 2008; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013). However, GCC-EU institutional discourse is still relatively under-explored by discourse analysts and very few studies exist that have analysed co-authored Arabic-English diplomatic corpora using bilingual analyses. The present study addresses this gap on three fronts. *Empirically*, it opens the GCC-EU institutional archive as a coherent discursive site. *Theoretically*, it links the DHA with van Dijk's (2008) sociocognitive theory of context, using the *context model* as the conceptual bridge that explains how identical political stances generate systematically different surface forms across genres and languages. *Methodologically*, it combines diachronic recontextualization analysis, cross-genre comparison, and bilingual corpus-assisted support within a single analytical design. Three research questions guide the analysis: (RQ1) How is Iran constructed as a discursive actor across the corpus, and how does this construction shift between the GCC-only and GCC-EU registers? (RQ2) Through which intertextual and interdiscursive resources is legitimacy produced in C1, and how do they cohere into a layered legitimation structure? (RQ3) How are earlier GCC-EU commitments recontextualized into the crisis discourse of C1, and with what argumentative effect?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 CDA, the DHA, and Sociocognitive Context

Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; van Dijk, 1993, 2008; Wodak, 2001) treats discourse as a constitutive social practice through which power relations are enacted, legitimated, and reproduced. Institutional discourse condenses and naturalises ideological positions through the authority of its genres, producers, and conditions of circulation (Fairclough, 2003). Within this field, van Dijk's (2008) sociocognitive theory of context redefines context not as a set of objective social variables but as a subjective participant construct — a *context model* — that mediates between the social situation and the structures of text and talk. Context models control the production and comprehension of discourse, define conditions of appropriateness, and ground a theory of style, genre, and register. For co-authored multilateral texts, the framework is directly enabling: the discursive features of a joint communiqué cannot be read off the political situation but must be understood as the surface trace of how participants collectively construct the situation as one that requires *this* particular formulation. The Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009; Wodak, 2011) foregrounds the historical reconstruction of discourse production, the intertextual chains that connect texts to prior and subsequent communicative events, and the systematic analysis of argumentation strategies, including *topoi* and their legitimatory functions. Its commitment to triangulation across data, methods, theories, and context levels suits texts produced at the intersection of multiple institutional voices and competing political imperatives (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

### 2.2 Diplomatic, Crisis, and Legitimation Discourse

Research on political and diplomatic discourse has focused on the construction of foreign policy in terms of rhetoric, the management of both international conflict through the use of discourse, and the legitimization strategies used by governmental and international actors in times of crisis (Chilton, 2004; Hodges, 2011; Lakoff, 1991; Cap, 2013; Reyes, 2011). Joint communiqués, summit declarations and conclusions from councils do not simply recount the consensus; rather, they create the consensus via negotiated formulations, employed strategic ambiguity and provide a managed institutional voice (Bjola & Kornprobst, 2013). Crisis-related discourse tends to constrain the deliberative space and centre legitimising resources around the ideas of legality, necessity, security, and protection. Studies on legitimisation, as conducted by van Leeuwen (2007), Reisigl & Wodak (2001), and Vaara (2014), indicate that appeal to authoritative normative standards such as the UN Charter serve as an intertextual argumentation strategy and derive their ability to persuade via the institutionally based authoritative status of the cited authority. Modern multilateral texts usually have a mix of legal, humanitarian and economic-security styles of writing. (Hansen, 2006; Krzyżanowski, 2018).

### 2.3 Corpus-Assisted and Bilingual Approaches

Corpus-based discourse analysis adds methodological rigor to the application of empirically based procedures such as frequency, collocation, keyword tracking and modality positioning (Brown et al. 2008; Li and Pan 2025;

Lu and Zhou 2024; Partington et al., 2013) to a qualitative framework, providing data-driven support for qualitative frameworks, while maintaining sensitivity to contextualization and context bias when evaluating corpus linguistical evidence. Bilingual applications of this assimilated procedures are still limited to specific domains but can proved to be useful for identifying the similarities and differences between parallel texts that exist in strict developed bases as a basis for establishing a uniform body of work across disparate legal specializations. (Munday, 2012; Schäffner, 2004).

#### 2.4 The Research Gap

Scholarship specifically addressing GCC–EU institutional discourse remains limited. Existing work on Gulf diplomatic language tends to focus on bilateral relations between individual GCC states and major powers, or on the GCC’s internal communication, rather than on the co-produced multilateral discourse of the GCC–EU partnership. Studies of EU external relations discourse have examined the Union’s engagement with neighbouring regions and its use of normative frameworks in foreign policy (Carta & Morin, 2014; Krzyżanowski, 2018) but have not treated the GCC–EU dyad as a distinct discursive site, nor addressed the bilingual production conditions of GCC–EU joint texts. The 1988 Agreement, recurring joint ministerial meetings, and the inaugural GCC–EU summit of October 2024 together constitute an institutional archive of relevance for analysing how crisis discourse is built across time. No sustained discourse-historical account exists of how the 5 March 2026 statement constructs Iran as a state-level aggressor, produces bloc solidarity, layers legitimation registers, or recontextualizes earlier commitments. The present study addresses these gaps.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design and Theoretical Framework

The study employs a qualitative, problem-oriented research design grounded in CDA, with the DHA as its governing analytical framework (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009) and van Dijk’s (2008) sociocognitive theory of context as its complementary theoretical layer. The point of departure is a bounded diplomatic event — the extraordinary GCC–EU ministerial meeting of 5 March 2026 — convened to address Iran’s military attacks against GCC member states. The DHA was selected because the primary text is not an isolated communicative act but a node in a dense intertextual chain extending from the 1988 Agreement through successive ministerial communiqués to the crisis-driven joint statement; its emphasis on historicity, recontextualization, argumentation, and triangulation suits this intertextual density (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The integration of van Dijk’s (2008) context theory accounts for divergence between the joint-communicé register and the press-remarks register, and between Arabic and English co-versions: each genre and language activates a distinct *context model*.

#### 3.2 Corpus Construction and Source Protocol

The corpus is a closed, two-tier collection spanning October 2023 to March 2026 (Table 1). Tier 1 texts were retrieved exclusively from official institutional sources (the General Secretariat of the GCC, the European External Action Service, and the Council of the European Union). Where a text was issued in both Arabic and English by the same source, both versions were collected and treated as parallel authoritative co-versions, consistent with translation-studies treatment of co-versioned diplomatic texts (Munday, 2012; Schäffner, 2004). Bilingual alignment was performed manually at the paragraph level, with sentence-level cross-checking for all paragraphs cited in the analysis. Tier 2 texts were selected on three criteria: explicit citation in or by a core text (Article 51, the 1988 Agreement); intertextual proximity to C1 (the GCC extraordinary statement of 1 March 2026 and the EU High Representative’s press remarks of 5 March 2026); and institutional standing as authoritative co-text (relevant Council of the EU conclusions). Tier 2 texts were not coded under the full nine-strategy framework; their function was contextual and evidential at the broader socio-political level (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, level 4).

Table 1. Corpus composition

Tier	Code	Text	Date	Function
Core	C1	Extraordinary GCC–EU ministerial statement	5 March 2026	Primary analytical site
Core	C2	29th GCC–EU joint mini communiqué	October 2025	Pre-crisis baseline

Tier	Code	Text	Date	Function
Core	C3	Inaugural GCC–EU summit communiqué	October 2024	Foundational summit text
Core	C4	27th GCC–EU ministerial co-ordination statement	October 2023	Earliest baseline text
Contextual	T2	GCC extraordinary statement (11 March 2026); EU High Representative remarks (5 March 2026); Court of Justice of the EU conclusions; Article 51 of the EU Charter; 1988 Cooperation Agreement	2023–2026	Selective intertextual reference

### 3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis operationalises a nine-strategy DHA framework (Table 2). Each strategy is paired with its analytical object and the principal evidence on which the analytical claim rests. Strategies are applied across the DHA’s four context levels: immediate co-text; intertextual and interdiscursive relations; institutional setting; and broader socio-political context (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Table 2. Operationalised analytical framework: nine discursive strategies, analytical objects, and evidence types

Strategy	Analytical object	Principal textual evidence
Nomination / reference	How social actors, events, and processes are named	Proper nouns; institutional designations; nominal phrases
Predication	What attributes and evaluation are ascribed to actors and events	Adjectival modifiers; evaluative epithets; attributive verbs
Argumentation	What <i>topoi</i> justify claims of legitimacy, threat, or responsibility	Topical signposts; conditional and causal connectives; legal premises
Perspectivization / framing	From which standpoint claims are formulated	Reporting verbs; stance markers; framing devices
Intensification / mitigation	How illocutionary force is strengthened or attenuated	Boosters and downtoners; modal verbs; hedging adverbs
Intertextuality	How texts invoke or reproduce other texts	Direct and indirect quotation; citation of legal instruments
Interdiscursivity	How distinct discourses are combined within a single text	Co-occurrence of register-specific lexis; semantic shifts
Recontextualization	How elements migrate across texts with shifts in function	Reformulated commitments; lexical retention with frame shift
Pronoun / deixis	How person, place, and time deictics construct collective identity	First-person plural pronouns; collective subject; temporal deictics

### 3.4 Corpus-Assisted and Bilingual Procedures

A corpus-assisted layer implemented via AntConc 4.x supplements qualitative reading: frequency lists, internal keyword analysis (each core text in turn as study corpus, the others as reference), collocation extraction (window  $\pm 5$ ;  $MI^3 \geq 3$ ; minimum frequency 3), KWIC concordances for high-salience nodes (*Iran, attacks, self-defence, Ministers, condemn, call*), pronoun and modality profiling, and lexical field mapping across seven thematic domains: legality, security, humanitarian, economic, identity, deterrence, and dialogue. This layer functions as heuristic input — to identify candidate patterns, test typicality, and flag absences (Baker et al., 2008; Partington et al., 2013). Quantitative signals discipline rather than displace qualitative interpretation. The bilingual layer was applied at four nodes at which Arabic–English variation is most consequential: nomination of Iran and the GCC, predication of the attacks, the legal formulation invoking Article 51, and pronominal deixis. The

institutional Arabic formulations engaged with correspond to standard, repeatedly attested phraseology of GCC and Arabic UN diplomatic registers — for example, العربية الخليج لدول التعاون مجلس for the GCC, إيران جمهورية الإسلامية for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and ومجتمعين فرادى as the canonical Arabic UN Charter wording for *individually and collectively*. The bilingual layer is a discourse-analytical comparison of two parallel authoritative co-versions, not a translation evaluation. Reliability is maintained through a dated analytical log, archived corpus outputs, bilingual cross-checking, contextual evidencing for Level 4 claims, and explicit recording of quantitative–qualitative divergences.

#### 4. Findings

##### 4.1 Nomination and Predication: Constructing Iran as State-Level Aggressor

Iran is consistently nominated through institutional referential markers — *Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranian attacks* — that anchor responsibility unambiguously at the state level, with no recourse to proxy attribution, agent-deletion, or structural framing that might attenuate state responsibility. The Arabic co-version retains this referential precision through جمهورية إيران الإسلامية and الإيرانية الهجمات, fixing responsibility on Iran as a state rather than on a sub-state or proxy actor. Predication is uniformly negative and semantically intensified: *unjustifiable, inexcusable, indiscriminate*. The intertextual chain is informative. In the antecedent GCC-only extraordinary statement of 1 March 2026 the corresponding noun phrases are *treacherous Iranian attacks* and *heinous attacks*, lexically more affective than the C1 formulation *strongly condemned the unjustifiable Iranian attacks*. The Arabic co-version of the GCC-only statement uses the canonical institutional epithet الغادرة (treacherous, perfidious), which carries a strongly evaluative-moral charge in Arabic political-religious register that English *treacherous* approximates but does not fully reproduce. In C1 the Arabic moves into the more juridical-institutional register signalled by المبررة غير (unjustifiable) and المقبولة غير (unacceptable). The bilingual evidence is analytically productive: in both languages, the move from the GCC-only to the GCC–EU register involves a register shift toward juridical formality, and the Arabic shift is more pronounced precisely because الغادرة mobilises a moral-betrayal frame with no exact analogue in the C1 Arabic vocabulary. The lexical shift is therefore not a softening of position but a *genre-disciplined redistribution of evaluative force*: the same condemnatory commitment is moved from morally affective to juridical-institutional lexis, with the rhetorical work of condemnation transferred from individual lexical items to the cumulative authority of the co-authored signature *the Ministers*.

##### 4.2 Pronoun, Deixis, and the Discursive Construction of Bloc Solidarity

The construction of a unified GCC–EU bloc is achieved primarily through pronoun and deixis. The dominant subject in C1 is the inclusive collective *the Ministers* (Arabic: الوزراء), a deictic formulation that suppresses institutional distinction and enacts solidarity at the grammatical level. Inclusive plural verbs in English (*affirmed, condemned, called for, commended*) and the corresponding Arabic perfective-plural forms (أدانوا، أكدوا، أشادوا، بدعوا) project a single negotiated voice and erase the visible seams of consensus production. Across the entire C1 there is no instance in which the joint subject is split into a GCC-side and an EU-side voice, and no instance in which a position is attributed to one side only. This pattern contrasts sharply with the press remarks of EU High Representative Kaja Kallas immediately following the meeting, in which first-person plural usage bifurcates between an EU-internal *we* (*we are organising our people out of the region; we have been working closely with our embassies*) and an aspirational inclusive *we* directed toward the GCC (*what we can do together; the partnership we are building*). The contrast indicates that bloc cohesion is a *discursive accomplishment of the formal genre* rather than a naturally given political condition; the press register exposes the more contingent and asymmetrical character of the partnership. C1 simultaneously extends this constructed solidarity by repeatedly linking *regional security, European security, and international peace and security* — supported in the corpus-assisted layer by systematic co-occurrence of *security* with both *Gulf* and *European/international* within five-token windows.

##### 4.3 Argumentation, Intertextuality, and the Topos of Legality

Legitimation centres on the *topos* of legality. Article 51 of the UN Charter is explicitly cited in C1 as the authoritative basis for the GCC states' right to defend themselves *individually and collectively* (Arabic: فرادى ومجتمعين), reproducing the Charter's legal phrasing in both languages and deriving legitimacy force from international law. This is a paradigmatic instance of what van Leeuwen (2007) terms *authorisation*, functioning simultaneously as intertextual citation and argumentative premise from which legitimate self-defence is derived (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The bilingual identity of the legal phrasing is itself argumentatively significant: by reproducing the canonical Arabic UN Charter wording, C1 closes off any reading in which the GCC's invocation of Article 51 might be construed as an externally imposed legal frame. The legal anchoring is

reinforced by interdiscursive blending. Security discourse of self-defence is merged with humanitarian discourse — *protection of civilians, international humanitarian law, targeting of civilian infrastructure* — and with economic-security discourse — *stability of global energy markets, Strait of Hormuz, freedom of navigation*. The corpus-assisted layer confirms that these domains co-occur within the same paragraphs of C1 at a markedly higher rate than in C2–C4, where each tends to occupy its own paragraph cluster. The result is a multi-register legitimation structure in which the defence of GCC sovereignty is simultaneously framed as humanitarian necessity and as a matter of European and global order. Importantly, deterrence does not displace diplomacy: both the 1 March GCC statement and C1 retain *dialogue, diplomacy, and de-escalation* as the preferred horizon of crisis resolution.

#### 4.4 Diachronic Recontextualization

The guarantee that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) land (i.e., Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia) would not be used to launch a military attack against Iran belongs in C3 (October 2024) and C2 (October 2025) as a conventional diplomatic reassurance; in C1, however, it is recontextualized as evidence of such prior restraint and good faith. This erstwhile unmarked undertaking operates as an argumentative resource facilitating the construction of a narrative of provoked restraint - the GCC is situated as having entered into preventive diplomatic commitments prior to being attacked. Thus, the same lexical item thus operates performatively to deliver alternate argumentative work across distinct contexts (Bernstein, 1990; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). A similar (albeit less distinctive) pattern is observable with respect to the trajectory of the nomination of Iran. For example, in both C4 (October 2023) and C3, there are references that have been mediated through general formulations, such as '[ensuring] regional stability and [maintaining] positive relations with all of their Gulf neighbours'. The C2 approach marks a shift towards more direct but contingent possible references concerning concerns with Iranian activity; C1 moves away from the above format altogether, as Iran is mentioned directly and negatively in each instance, and further, Article 51 is specifically referenced. (Table 3).

Table 3. Diachronic distribution of selected discursive strategies across the core corpus (C4 → C1)

Strategy	C4 (Oct 2023)	C3 (Oct 2024)	C2 (Oct 2025)	C1 (5 March 2026)
Nomination of Iran	Indirect / regional	Direct / regional	Conditional conc	Direct: <i>Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran</i>
Predication of Iranian conduct	Neutral / cooperative	Neutral / cooperative	Mildly evaluative	Strongly negative: <i>unjustifiable, inexcusable, indiscriminate</i>
<i>Topos</i> of legality	Absent	Implicit	Implicit	Explicit (Article 51; <i>individual and collectively</i> / مجتمعيين فرادى)
Interdiscursive blending	Limited	Moderate	Moderate	Dense (legal + humanitarian + economic-security in single paragraphs)
Pronominal solidarity	Co-chairs' form	Summit-level	Ministerial	Inclusive <i>the Ministers</i> / وزراء
Recontextualized commitment	Original site	Reaffirmed	Reaffirmed	Reaffirmed as evidence of restraint

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Genre Discipline and the Distribution of Evaluative Force

Finding 4.1 established a systematic lexical shift between the GCC-only register (*treacherous, heinous; الغادرة*) and the GCC–EU register (*unjustifiable, inexcusable; المبررة غير*), with nomination and predication remaining uniformly negative across both. This supports the concept of *genre-disciplined redistribution of evaluative force*: the systematic process by which a co-authored institutional genre transposes condemnatory commitment from morally affective to juridical-institutional lexis without reducing the underlying evaluative position. The mechanism has three components. The genre selection — joint multilateral communiqué — activates a context model in van Dijk's (2008) sense in which the appropriateness conditions of register exclude affective extremity. The rhetorical work of condemnation is reassigned from individual lexical items to the cumulative authority of the co-authored signature. The underlying evaluative commitment is preserved through unambiguous nomination and uniformly negative predication. Condemnation is lexically restrained but

institutionally amplified. The implication is that studies of multilateral crisis discourse should not equate lexical moderation with political moderation; the difference is precisely what genre is *for*.

### 5.2 Bloc Solidarity as Discursive Accomplishment

Finding 4.2 established that C1 sustains an inclusive collective subject (*the Ministers / الوزراء*) without side-attribution, while Kallas's press remarks bifurcate first-person plural use. This contrast supports the theorisation of *bloc solidarity as discursive accomplishment*: the perceived cohesion of the GCC–EU bloc is not a stable political property the joint text describes but an effect the joint genre actively produces — and which disappears when the same content is re-rendered in a different genre. Pronominal collectivisation produces solidarity at the grammatical level; the absence of side-attributed positions produces it at the propositional level. The bifurcated *we* of the press register exposes the contingent character of the partnership because that genre activates a different context model, in which the speaker's institutional positioning as EU High Representative is communicatively foregrounded rather than collectively absorbed. Methodologically, studies reading multilateral cohesion off joint communiqués alone risk mistaking a genre effect for a political condition; triangulation with adjacent genres is therefore constitutive.

### 5.3 Layered Legitimation and Multi-Register Authority

Finding 4.3 established that within single paragraphs of C1, lexis from the legality domain (*Article 51, self-defence, individually and collectively / ومجتمعين فرادى*), the humanitarian domain (*protection of civilians, international humanitarian law*), and the economic-security domain (*Strait of Hormuz, freedom of navigation*) co-occur at a markedly higher rate than in C2–C4. This supports the theorisation of *layered legitimation*: the simultaneous mobilisation of multiple authorising registers within a single text, such that each reinforces the legitimacy of claims in the others. The mechanism is interdiscursive blending in the technical DHA sense (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), but its political function is best captured in van Leeuwen's (2007) terms: *authorisation* (Article 51), *moral evaluation* (protection of civilians), and *rationalisation* (energy markets, Strait of Hormuz) operate as mutually reinforcing layers. Layered legitimation makes the GCC–EU position more difficult to challenge because any single counter-argument addresses only one register at a time: a critic of the legal claim under Article 51 must still account for the humanitarian claim around *protection of civilians* and the economic-security claim around *freedom of navigation*. The structure distributes the burden of refutation across registers. Within the bounded corpus, this points to a broader pattern warranting comparative testing: that contemporary multilateral crisis texts increasingly favour multi-register over single-register justification.

### 5.4 The Deterrence–Dialogue Dyad

Findings 4.3 and 4.4 established that C1 simultaneously invokes Article 51 self-defence provisions and commends *the constructive role of Oman* as a diplomatic interlocutor, while retaining *dialogue, diplomacy, and de-escalation* as the preferred horizon of resolution. This supports the theorisation of a *deterrence–dialogue dyad*: a paired discursive configuration in which a credible commitment to defensive response is articulated alongside an explicit commitment to negotiated de-escalation, with neither term displacing the other. The dyad has three textual signatures in C1: the explicit invocation of Article 51's self-defence provisions; the commendation of *the constructive role of Oman*; and the recall of the responsibility of the UN Security Council. It performs a specific perspectivization function (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), constructing the GCC–EU bloc as sufficiently resolute to deter further aggression yet sufficiently restrained to remain a credible diplomatic partner. The dyad shows how multilateral actors negotiate the competing demands of immediate condemnation and longer-term diplomatic positioning within a single text (Cap, 2013; Hodges, 2011).

### 5.5 The Institutional Archive as Active Legitimation Resource

Finding 4.4 established that the assurance that GCC territories would not be used to launch attacks against Iran — formulated in C2 and C3 as routine diplomatic reassurance — is retrieved into C1 unchanged in lexis but transformed in argumentative function. This supports the theorisation of the *institutional archive as active legitimation resource*: a structured intertextual reserve of routine commitments that, under crisis conditions, can be selectively retrieved and reframed as evidence of the position the actor wishes to project. In C1 the retrieved formulation is no longer reassurance; it is *evidence* — a demonstration that the GCC had bound itself to restraint *before* the attacks of 28 February 2026, supporting a narrative of provoked rather than initiated confrontation. This refines the DHA's general claim that recontextualization is never semantically neutral (Bernstein, 1990; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010) by specifying a particular sub-type: *crisis-driven retrieval*, in which the temporal asymmetry between original formulation and retrieved use is itself argumentatively productive.

### 5.6 Higher-Order Implications

Taken together, the five concepts elaborated above — *genre-disciplined redistribution of evaluative force*, *bloc solidarity as discursive accomplishment*, *layered legitimation*, the *deterrence–dialogue dyad*, and the *institutional archive as active legitimation resource* — constitute a set of mid-range analytical tools applicable beyond the GCC–EU case. For diplomatic discourse theory, they specify how co-authored multilateral genres do political work that is not reducible to either the political positions they encode or the linguistic features they exhibit. For crisis communication scholarship, they show how multilateral crisis texts achieve persuasive force through register layering and intertextual retrieval rather than rhetorical extremity. For institutional legitimation studies, they indicate that legitimacy in the multilateral register is built distributively, across registers and texts, rather than concentrated in any single argumentative move. These implications are advanced, within the bounded corpus, as analytical hypotheses warranting further comparative testing.

### 6. Conclusion

This study has examined the discursive construction of crisis, legitimacy, threat, and diplomatic solidarity in the official discourse of the extraordinary GCC–EU ministerial meeting of 5 March 2026. Adopting the DHA within CDA and integrating van Dijk’s (2008) sociocognitive theory of context, it applied a nine-strategy framework across a closed, two-tier bilingual corpus, with the co-authored extraordinary joint statement (C1) as the primary site and three antecedent communiqués as the diachronic baseline.

Within the bounded corpus, the analysis indicates that Iran is constructed as a state-level aggressor through unambiguous nomination and uniformly intensified negative predication, with the joint diplomatic genre disciplining lexical extremity into co-authored institutional condemnation without diminishing its delegitimatory force. GCC–EU bloc cohesion functions as a discursive achievement produced by the joint communiqué form rather than a pre-existing condition, with the press-remarks register exposing a more asymmetrical and contingent partnership. Legitimation operates through a layered interdiscursive architecture in which legal authority, humanitarian norms, and economic-security imperatives are simultaneously mobilised. The coexistence of deterrence and dialogue enacts a dual-track diplomatic logic. Diachronically, routine bilateral commitments are recontextualized as evidence of prior restraint, suggesting that the GCC–EU institutional archive functions as an active legitimation resource rather than as inert background.

These findings yield three contributions. *Empirically*, the study opens the GCC–EU institutional archive as a coherent discursive site, demonstrating that the bilateral relationship possesses a structured intertextual memory shaping crisis communication. *Theoretically*, integrating DHA with van Dijk’s (2008) sociocognitive theory of context yields explanatory leverage that neither framework supplies alone: context-model theory explains *why* the same political position generates systematically different surface forms across genres and languages, while the DHA supplies the analytical apparatus for tracing these differences. *Methodologically*, it demonstrates the productivity of combining diachronic recontextualization analysis, cross-genre comparison, and bilingual corpus-assisted support within a single design.

The principal limitation is the exclusion of internal deliberative documents, which means the analysis captures only the publicly authorised face of the GCC–EU encounter. The bilingual layer is restricted to canonical Arabic institutional formulations consistently attested in GCC and Arabic UN registers; full line-by-line concordancing of the Arabic co-versions would refine the present account. Future research could extend the analysis to subsequent GCC–EU texts produced after March 2026 and to comparable multilateral crisis statements involving other regional blocs.

What the study changes, within these bounds, is how multilateral crisis discourse should be read. Its analytical centre of gravity lies neither in the lexical surface of such texts nor in the political positions they encode, but in the genre-conditioned mechanisms through which co-authored multilateral genres convert political alignment into a discursive position internally cohesive and externally defensible across multiple normative registers: *register transposition*, *pronominal collectivisation*, *layered legitimation*, the *deterrence–dialogue dyad*, and *crisis-driven retrieval*. The extraordinary GCC–EU statement does not merely respond to a regional security crisis; it redefines that crisis as a legal, humanitarian, economic, and geopolitical problem extending beyond the Gulf. Reading such texts adequately means reading them as instances of multilateral genre at work — an analytical programme whose relevance extends well beyond the case examined here.

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