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**REASSESSING THE “AXIS OF RESISTANCE”:
A SUNNI THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IRAN–ISRAEL–U.S. CONFLICT**

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the escalation of the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict through a normative–interpretive Sunni theological framework, particularly one informed by *Ahlussunnah* and Athari-oriented perspectives. The conflict is not viewed only as a geopolitical confrontation, but also as a struggle over religious narratives and claims of moral legitimacy. Through qualitative library research and theological discourse analysis, this study uses key Sunni concepts—*tatsabbut*, *wala’* and *bara’*, avoidance of *ghuluw*, and political *fitnah*—to examine how contemporary political narratives are constructed and circulated. The analysis shows that the “axis of resistance” discourse functions not merely as political rhetoric, but also as a way of shaping Muslim perceptions of legitimacy, loyalty, and enmity. The conflict also places strategic pressure on Gulf states through energy vulnerability and maritime insecurity, especially because of the Strait of Hormuz’s role as a major global chokepoint. For Muslims in Indonesia, the issue is relevant through dependence on Middle Eastern crude oil and LPG supplies, as well as through simplified religious narratives circulating in digital spaces. These findings underline the need for theological caution and geopolitical awareness when interpreting contemporary conflicts.

**AI DISCLOSURE
STATEMENT**

The author used artificial intelligence (AI), specifically Perplexity, to assist in literature searching, language polishing, structuring the manuscript, drafting the initial version of the article, and translating the original manuscript into English. The entire content of the article has been reviewed, verified, and remains fully the responsibility of the author.

A. INTRODUCTION

Conflicts in the Middle East are rarely shaped by military rivalry alone. Territorial disputes, shifting alliances, and security competition remain important, but contemporary conflicts in the region are also carried by narratives, religious symbols, and claims of moral legitimacy. These elements influence how Muslim audiences understand political actors, decide whom to trust, and interpret causes presented as Islamic or anti-imperial. The Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict illustrates this dynamic because it is not only fought through military and diplomatic confrontation, but also through religiously charged language that frames certain actors as defenders of Islam, Palestine, and resistance to Western domination.

The conflict also reaches beyond the main belligerents. For Gulf states, escalation creates pressure through maritime insecurity, energy vulnerability, and uncertainty around strategic shipping routes, especially the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports that the Strait of Hormuz is the world’s largest oil-transit chokepoint, with around 23.2 million barrels per day passing through it in the first half of 2025, while about one-fifth of global LNG trade also moved through the strait in 2024.³⁸³ Beyond the Gulf, the conflict also affects Muslim audiences in countries such as Indonesia, where global political narratives circulate widely through digital religious discourse and may influence theological and political judgment. Research by PPIM UIN Jakarta shows that conservative religious narratives have a strong presence in Indonesian social media and that accounts associated with Islamist and conservative tendencies have significant potential to shape online religious conversations.³⁸⁴

Existing studies on the Iran–Israel conflict and Gulf security have mostly approached the issue through geopolitics, regional security architecture, and the Iran–Saudi rivalry. Kamrava (2024), for example, explains continuity and change in Persian Gulf security by

³⁸³ “World Oil Transit Chokepoints,” U.S. Energy Information Administration, March 3, 2026, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/special-topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints.

³⁸⁴ PPIM UIN Jakarta, “Conservative Narratives Dominates Social Media,” Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta Official Website, November 16, 2020, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://www.uinjkt.ac.id/en/ppim-uin-jakarta-conservative-narratives-dominates-social-media>.

looking at both structural factors and the agency of regional policymakers.³⁸⁵ Other studies examine the Saudi–Iran rivalry by showing how power politics, sectarian identity, and religious or secular role conceptions are used strategically by regional actors.³⁸⁶ These works are useful for understanding regional competition, yet they leave limited room for a specifically Sunni theological reading of how Muslim audiences interpret narratives of “resistance,” legitimacy, and loyalty.

This article responds to that gap by using a normative–interpretive Sunni theological framework informed by Ahlussunnah with Athari-oriented influences. Concepts such as *tatsabbut*, *wala’* and *bara’*, avoidance of *ghuluw*, and political *fitnah* are used as analytical tools to examine how religious legitimacy is built within conflict narratives. Theology is therefore not treated only as a set of prescriptive doctrines, but also as an interpretive lens for reading the relationship between political discourse and theological principle. This approach places the article closer to theological discourse analysis than to a purely geopolitical or strategic study.

The article is guided by four questions: how is the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict framed through religious narratives; how can Sunni theological principles inform the reading of this conflict; how does escalation place strategic and economic pressure on Gulf states; and what implications does the conflict have for Muslims in Indonesia? Through these questions, the article offers two contributions. First, it brings Sunni theological interpretation into a field often dominated by geopolitical analysis. Second, it shows that the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict is not only a regional security crisis, but also a transnational discursive and economic event whose effects are felt across Muslim societies beyond the immediate battlefield.

³⁸⁵ Mehran Kamrava, “Structure, Agency, and Persian Gulf Security: Continuity amid Change,” *Comparative Strategy* 44, no. 1 (January 2025): 115–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2024.2445493>.

³⁸⁶ Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, Hussain Abbas, and Irfan Hasnain Qaisrani, “Structural Sources of Saudi–Iran Rivalry and Competition for the Sphere of Influence,” *Sage Open* 11, no. 3 (July 2021): 21582440211032642, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211032642>; Babak RezaeeDaryakenari, Özgür Özdamar, and Yasemin Akbaba, “Battle of Sects? Iran and Saudi Arabia’s Role Conflict,” *Politics and Religion* 18, no. 4 (December 2025): 535–60, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048325100126>.

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative design that combines library research with theological discourse analysis. The discussion is framed within a normative–interpretive Sunni theological perspective, especially one informed by *Ahlussunnah*-oriented and *Athari*-influenced readings in contemporary Sunni scholarship. Since the article does not rely on fieldwork, the main focus is placed on texts, discourses, and public narratives that construct religious meanings around the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict. This approach allows the article to connect geopolitical developments with Sunni theological evaluation, while still recognizing that it does not represent the whole spectrum of Islamic thought on the issue.

As a library-based study, the research draws on written materials selected for their relevance, credibility, and closeness to the research problem. This approach is consistent with Islamic studies, where textual sources, scholarly traditions, and interpretive works often serve as central research materials.³⁸⁷ The primary sources include Qur’anic verses, hadith, and classical as well as contemporary Sunni works that discuss key theological concepts, including *tatsabbut* (careful verification of information), *wala’* and *bara’* (loyalty and disavowal), *ghuluw* (religious or political excess), and *fitnah siyasiyyah* (political tribulation and its effect on moral judgment). The secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports from credible research institutions, and reliable international news or analysis related to the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict, the Iran–Saudi rivalry, Gulf security, and strategic energy routes such as the Strait of Hormuz.

These theological concepts are used not only as doctrinal references, but also as analytical tools for reading political narratives. *Tatsabbut* is used to examine how political and media narratives present claims about enmity, solidarity, or “resistance,” especially when such claims simplify historical relations or produce heroic self-representations. *Wala’* and *bara’* help analyze how loyalty and hostility are framed in religious terms, particularly in relation to Sunni–Shi’i identity, state actors, and non-state armed groups. *Ghuluw* is used to identify forms of discursive glorification or demonization that elevate political actors beyond

³⁸⁷ Mary W. George, *The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know* (Princeton University Press, 2008).

proportionate theological judgment. Political *fitnah* is used to read situations where polarization and competing religious claims may blur moral and theological judgment.

The analysis was carried out in several stages. First, primary and secondary texts were collected and organized, including theological treatises, fatwas or scholarly statements, official speeches, media reports, and policy analyses related to the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict and Gulf security. Second, key narratives were identified, such as the “axis of resistance,” portrayals of Gulf monarchies, and framings of Sunni–Shi‘i relations. These narratives were then grouped into thematic categories, including religious legitimation, construction of enemies, and representations of Gulf vulnerability. Third, the themes were examined through theological discourse analysis to see how religious symbols, scriptural references, and theological terms are used to build legitimacy, create alliances, or frame rivals. The analysis follows Fairclough’s (1992) understanding of discourse as an interaction between text, discursive practice, and social practice, while also drawing on Van Dijk’s (1998) discussion of ideological discourse, particularly the tendency toward positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Fourth, the discursive patterns were read alongside the selected Sunni theological benchmarks in order to assess the degree of alignment or tension between political narratives and theological principles. The final stage considered how these discursive and theological dynamics may shape Muslim understandings of the conflict in Indonesia, especially when global narratives are emotionally charged and easily circulated.³⁸⁸

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Salaf Scholars’ View on Conflict and Political Fitnah

Within the Sunni theological tradition, classical scholars have discussed how divine wisdom may appear when oppressive actors confront one another. Early authorities are often read as suggesting that the weakening of oppressive power can be understood, within a theological horizon, as part of Allah’s justice against wrongdoing. Al-Awza‘i is reported to have stated that when two depraved men fight and Allah destroys one of them, this is a matter deserving gratitude; if both perish, even greater praise is warranted. Malik ibn Anas is likewise

³⁸⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Wiley, 1993); Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 1st ed, Communication (London: SAGE Publications, 1998).

cited as saying that Allah may punish one wrongdoer by means of another and then punish both. Ibn Taymiyyah also notes that when oppressors quarrel among themselves and some prevail over others, this may bring relief to those who suffered under their injustice.³⁸⁹

These statements are used here not as direct political verdicts on contemporary actors, but as conceptual resources within a Sunni theological framework for thinking about conflict. When cautiously brought into dialogue with modern confrontations, including those involving the post-revolutionary Iranian state and Israel, this line of reasoning allows for a selective reading: the weakening of oppressive power may benefit vulnerable populations, but the protection of innocent life remains central. A Sunni theological reading therefore avoids treating either side as automatically deserving *wala'* when both are perceived, in different ways, as implicated in doctrinal controversy, internal repression, or violations of basic rights.

Classical Sunni writings also contain sharp critiques of some doctrinal and political tendencies historically associated with Rafidi groups. Ibn Taymiyyah, for example, describes certain Rafidi currents as harmful to Muslim communal integrity because of their stance toward the Companions, tendencies toward *ghuluw*, and patterns of political alignment with external powers.³⁹⁰ In this article, such assessments are read as part of internal Sunni polemical and theological discourse, not as a direct mapping onto the contemporary Iranian state or onto Shi'i communities in general. Since these formulations emerged in premodern polemical and political contexts, they are used only to show how some Sunni theological traditions conceptualized internal threat, alliances, sectarian polarization, and communal destabilization.

On that basis, the Sunni theological perspective used in this article does not reduce the current confrontation between actors linked to Iranian revolutionary and transnational Shi'i political discourse and Israel into a simple struggle between a "purely Islamic" bloc and a

³⁸⁹ Abu Abdillah Syamsuddin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Utsman adz-Dzahabi, *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'*, 12th ed., ed. Syu'aib al-Arnauth (Beirut: Mu'asasah ar-Risalah, 2011), <https://shamela.ws/book/10906>; Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1st ed. (Riyad: Universitas Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamiyah, 1986), <https://shamela.ws/book/927>; Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa* (Madinah al-Munawwarah: Majma' Raja Fahd untuk Percetakan Al-Quran, 2004), <https://shamela.ws/book/7289>.

³⁹⁰ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*.

“purely oppressive” bloc. A more careful reading recognizes that more than one party may carry elements of injustice, while the protection of Muslim and non-combatant lives, commitment to justice, and preservation of theological integrity remain necessary concerns. Three evaluative orientations follow from this reading: exercising *tatsabbut* toward claims of resistance and victory, avoiding *ghuluw* in praising or demonizing political actors, and grounding *wala'* and *bara'* in faith, ethics, and adherence to Islamic principles rather than fixed geopolitical or sectarian alignments.

These classical theological considerations help explain how contemporary Muslims may interpret, contest, or distance themselves from competing narratives surrounding the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict. They are not used to reproduce medieval polemics literally, but to clarify how a Sunni theological horizon can shape perceptions of conflict, solidarity, and political legitimacy today.

The “Resistance” Narrative and the Problem of Religious Legitimacy

Within contemporary Middle Eastern politics, the Iran–Israel confrontation is often represented through the language of “resistance,” “jihad,” and defiance against occupation and hegemony. In official discourse, media statements, and allied regional narratives, Iran and state or non-state actors aligned with it are commonly described as forming an “axis of resistance” against Israel and the United States. This label does more than describe a geopolitical position. It also creates a claim to religious and moral legitimacy by presenting the conflict as a struggle on behalf of the oppressed, especially Palestinians.

To make the discourse analysis clearer, the “axis of resistance” narrative is read here at three levels. At the textual level, attention is given to recurring keywords and evaluative expressions, such as “resistance,” “jihad,” “defense of the ummah,” “victory,” “oppression,” and “Western domination.” At the level of discursive practice, the analysis looks at how these terms are produced, repeated, and circulated through official Iranian rhetoric, state-aligned media, and allied regional narratives. At the level of social practice, it considers how this repetition may build a moral binary between a legitimate “resistance” camp and an illegitimate opposing camp. This follows Fairclough’s distinction between text, discursive practice, and

social practice, while also drawing on Van Dijk's discussion of ideological discourse, especially positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.³⁹¹

The strength of the "resistance" narrative lies in its use of religiously resonant language. Terms such as *muqawamah*, "front of resistance," and "defense of the ummah" frame Iran and its allies as defenders of Muslim dignity against Zionism and Western domination. Gulf states, by contrast, may be portrayed as passive, overly pragmatic, or insufficiently committed to Palestine. This oppositional framing can reorganize political loyalties and assign moral authority in ways that are not always transparent. Recent scholarship supports this reading by treating the Resistance Axis not only as a strategic alliance, but also as an ideational network sustained by a shared normative vision of regional order and by discursive uses of "resistance" across political space.³⁹²

Concrete examples of this discourse appear in official Iranian rhetoric. In March 2024, Ali Khamenei stated that the events in Gaza had shown the "legitimacy of creation of Resistance Front," directly linking the Gaza war to the validation of a broader regional resistance formation.³⁹³ In September 2024, he declared that "The Palestinian Resistance is the victor, Hezbollah is the victor".³⁹⁴ In December 2024, he further described resistance as "a faith, a thought, a firm and heartfelt decision".³⁹⁵ These statements do not simply report battlefield developments. They help construct a durable claim to moral and religious legitimacy around a wider political project. Scholarship on Iranian propaganda and symbolic communication also shows how state-linked narratives often combine an elevated self-image

³⁹¹ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*; Dijk, *Ideology*.

³⁹² Edward Wastnidge and Simon Mabon, "The Resistance Axis and Regional Order in the Middle East: Nomos, Space, and Normative Alternatives," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 5 (October 2024): 954–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2023.2179975>.

³⁹³ "Gaza Has Shown Legitimacy of Creation of Resistance Front," text, Khamenei.Ir, Khamenei.ir, March 20, 2024, at Retrieved May 4, 2026, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/10664/Gaza-has-shown-legitimacy-of-creation-of-Resistance-Front>.

³⁹⁴ "The Palestinian Resistance Is the Victor, Hezbollah Is the Victor.," text, Khamenei.Ir, Khamenei.ir, September 25, 2024, at Retrieved May 4, 2026, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/11170/The-Palestinian-Resistance-is-the-victor-Hezbollah-is-the-victor>.

³⁹⁵ "Secret of the Epic of Resistance: The People of Gaza," Khamenei.Ir, January 22, 2025, at Retrieved May 4, 2026, <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/11412/Secret-of-the-epic-of-Resistance-The-people-of-Gaza?utm>.

with denunciatory representations of opponents in order to naturalize political identities and moral hierarchies.³⁹⁶

A similar pattern appears in Iranian state-aligned media. Press TV repeatedly labels regional armed activity as “Axis of Resistance” operations against Israel and its Western backers. Its October 2024 reporting, for example, framed operations by Palestinian and regional armed groups under the recurring heading “Axis of Resistance operations against Israeli occupation,” while another report presented a timeline of coordinated “Axis of Resistance” operations since October 7, 2023.³⁹⁷ This repeated framing helps position Iran and its allied actors as the center of an anti-Israel and anti-Western struggle in the eyes of wider Muslim audiences.

A Sunni theological reading of this narrative begins with *tatsabbut*, or careful verification. Claims about resistance, hostility, and historical enmity should not be accepted only because they are emotionally powerful or symbolically attractive. In this context, *tatsabbut* directs attention to the complexity of Iran–Israel relations over time, shifting regional alliances, and the difference between rhetorical hostility and political practice. The claim that one bloc is the sole or most authentic representative of resistance cannot be treated as self-evident; it needs to be assessed through evidence, historical context, and careful reading of political discourse.

The discussion above shows that the “axis of resistance” narrative operates not only as theological or moral language, but also as a framework that shapes perceptions of legitimacy, loyalty, and enmity. These discursive constructions do not remain in the realm of ideas. They intersect with concrete geopolitical realities, especially in regions where strategic, economic, and security interests are concentrated. The Persian Gulf and its surrounding

³⁹⁶ Goulia Ghardashkhani, Olmo Gözl, and Kevin L. Schwartz, “Introduction: Propagandas, Cultural Production, and Negotiating Ideology in Iran,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 2 (March 2024): 241–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2024.2342186>.

³⁹⁷ Presstv, “‘Axis of Resistance’ Operations against Israeli Occupation,” image, PressTV, PressTV, hJanuary 15, 2025, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2025/01/15/740931/jan-14-axis-resistance-ops-against-israeli-occupation>; Presstv, “Timeline of Axis of Resistance Operations against Israel since Oct. 7,” image, PressTV, PressTV, October 7, 2024, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2024/10/07/734766/one-year-alaqsa-timeline-axis-resistance-ops-against-israel>.

maritime routes therefore provide an important context in which narratives of resistance, rivalry, and alignment produce material consequences. Energy flows, maritime security, and regional power competition make the link between theological discourse and geopolitical pressure especially visible.

Escalation of the Conflict as Strategic Pressure on Gulf States

The escalation of the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict reaches beyond the main belligerents. For Gulf states, it becomes a source of strategic pressure through vulnerable energy infrastructure, maritime transit routes, market confidence, and regional security perceptions. This matters because several Gulf economies remain closely tied to hydrocarbon exports and to the uninterrupted functioning of critical shipping corridors, especially the Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait of Hormuz is central to global energy security. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports that oil flows through Hormuz averaged 20.9 million barrels per day in 2023, equivalent to about 20% of global petroleum liquids consumption, while around one-fifth of global LNG trade also passed through the strait. The same report identifies the waterway as a major export route for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iran.³⁹⁸ Under these conditions, escalation involving Iran, Israel, and the United States can quickly translate into shipping delays, insurance pressures, price volatility, and wider market uncertainty. Gulf states are directly exposed to these effects because their fiscal stability and economic planning remain closely tied to energy exports and secure maritime routes.

Strategic pressure on Gulf states is not limited to trade flows. Gulf governments also have to navigate deterrence, hedging, and de-escalation amid two overlapping uncertainties: the capacity of Iran and its regional networks to inflict damage, and the ambiguity of external security guarantees in a changing conflict environment. This has encouraged Gulf leaders to strengthen defensive capabilities, preserve communication channels with Tehran, and avoid

³⁹⁸ U.S. Energy Information Administration, “World Oil Transit Chokepoints,” at Retrieved May 5, 2026.

becoming the public frontline of a war that could expose domestic infrastructure to retaliatory attacks.

The pressure becomes clearer when threats extend to energy facilities, export terminals, and maritime traffic across the Gulf and adjoining sea lanes. Such disruptions affect not only crude oil exports, but also LNG shipments, refinery operations, petrochemical logistics, and the supply chains behind Gulf development strategies. UN Trade and Development has warned that disruptions around Hormuz can spill into fertilizer markets, trade costs, and wider commodity chains, extending the consequences beyond energy into food and industrial inputs.³⁹⁹ For Gulf states that have invested heavily in diversification and global positioning, these risks affect both material stability and the external perception of regional security.

Within the Sunni theological framework used here, these developments do not imply that any Gulf state is beyond criticism. The point is more specific: geopolitical escalation can make Gulf states vulnerable to spillover effects even when they are not direct belligerents. Moral evaluation and strategic analysis therefore need to be distinguished. Political alignments may still be criticized, while the destabilization of Gulf security can also be recognized as a factor that weakens economic resilience, humanitarian capacity, and regional mediation in the broader Muslim world.

The conflict should therefore not be reduced to a binary confrontation between Iran and Israel, or between an “axis of resistance” and a “Zionist–Western bloc.” Its consequences are also redistributed across neighboring states, especially the Gulf monarchies, which face the risks of shipping disruption, energy price shocks, investor caution, and rising security expenditures. The escalation works as a mechanism of pressure not only on the principal adversaries, but also on regional states whose economies and security systems are tied to the same maritime and energy networks.

³⁹⁹ “Hormuz Disruption Deepens Global Economic Strain across Trade, Prices and Finance,” UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), April 1, 2026, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://unctad.org/news/hormuz-disruption-deepens-global-economic-strain-across-trade-prices-and-finance>.

Seen in this way, the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict is not only a military confrontation. It also creates a strategic environment that places pressure on Gulf states through energy vulnerability, maritime insecurity, and reputational uncertainty. For Muslims reading the conflict through a Sunni theological lens, instability should not be treated as something limited to the most visible combatants. The costs of escalation can be redistributed across states that are economically exposed and geographically close to the conflict. Gulf states thus become part of the conflict’s wider strategic radius, even when they are not its formal initiators.

Implications of the Conflict for Muslims in Indonesia

The implications of the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict are not limited to the Middle East. For Muslims in Indonesia, two channels are especially important: energy vulnerability and the circulation of religious narratives in public discourse. Reuters reported that Indonesian officials said around 25% of the country’s crude oil imports and about 30% of its LPG imports came from the Middle East. This means that disruptions in the Gulf can quickly affect domestic prices, supply security, and fiscal planning.⁴⁰⁰ A conflict geographically distant from Indonesia may therefore still influence household welfare, transportation costs, and the state’s energy budget.

Indonesia’s energy system remains exposed to external shocks. Reuters also reported that the government considered shifting part of its crude oil sourcing away from the Middle East in response to heightened conflict risk, while continuing broader efforts to diversify supply.⁴⁰¹ In addition, Indonesia has pursued a longer-term LNG strategy to reduce dependence on costlier imported diesel in power generation, showing that energy security

⁴⁰⁰ Reuters, “Indonesia to Import More Crude Oil from US as Middle East Conflict Escalates, Minister Says,” *The Business Times*, Published Tue, March 3, 2026, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/international/asean/indonesia-import-more-crude-oil-us-middle-east-conflict-escalates-minister-says>.

⁴⁰¹ Reuters, “Indonesia to Propose \$10 Billion US Energy Imports Increase in Tariff Talks,” April 16, 2025, at Retrieved May 5, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/indonesia-propose-lifting-us-oil-lpg-imports-by-around-10-billion-2025-04-15/>.

remains a major policy concern.⁴⁰² Escalation in the Gulf is therefore not only a foreign-policy issue for Indonesia, but also an energy-security issue with domestic economic consequences.

The second channel is discursive. In Indonesia's digital religious sphere, Middle Eastern conflicts are often translated into simplified moral binaries that circulate through social media and online religious discussion. Research on Indonesian digital religion has noted the strong visibility of conservative religious narratives online, while recent work on misinformation around the Palestine–Israel issue shows how religious and political themes can blend in ways that intensify emotional identification and obscure doctrinal or geopolitical complexity.⁴⁰³ In such an environment, the “resistance” narrative may be received not as a specific political discourse, but as a general moral invitation to align with whichever actor is portrayed as opposing Israel and the West.

Indonesian responses to Middle Eastern conflict also appear in the statements of major Islamic organizations and in digital Muslim activism. Muhammadiyah issued an official statement on the Israel–Palestine war in October 2023, emphasizing humanitarian concern, support for Palestinian independence, and international action to stop violence.⁴⁰⁴ Nahdlatul Ulama also expressed concern over the escalation in Gaza and called for an immediate cessation of violence and a just resolution based on international law.⁴⁰⁵ These organizational responses show that Indonesian Muslim solidarity with Palestine is often articulated through humanitarian and legal language rather than direct alignment with a particular regional bloc. At the same time, digital mobilization around Palestine has taken more activist forms, including boycott campaigns linked to MUI Fatwa No. 83/2023 and circulated through

⁴⁰² Emily Chow, Fransiska Nangoy, and Fransiska Nangoy, “Indonesia Embarks on Long-Stalled LNG Push to Displace Diesel in Power Plants,” *Energy*, *Reuters*, March 7, 2025, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/indonesia-embarks-long-stalled-lng-push-displace-diesel-power-plants-2025-03-07/>.

⁴⁰³ PPIM UIN Jakarta, “PPIM UIN Jakarta,” at Retrieved May 5, 2026; Abiano Al Affan, “False Realities: Hoaxes on the Palestine–Israel Conflict in Indonesia’s Digital Media,” *Priviet Social Sciences Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 2026): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v6i4.1431>.

⁴⁰⁴ Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, “Perang Israel dan Palestina, Muhammadiyah Keluarkan Tujuh Poin Pernyataan Sikap,” Muhammadiyah, October 11, 2023, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2023/10/perang-israel-dan-palestina-muhammadiyah-keluarkan-tujuh-poin-pernyataan-sikap/>.

⁴⁰⁵ Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama, *PBNU’s Statement of Position and Appeal Regarding the Current Situation of the Israel vs. Palesti...*, 2023, at Retrieved May 5, 2026, 09:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjc7X1aUgfY>.

platforms such as Instagram.⁴⁰⁶ Indonesian Muslim responses are therefore not monolithic; they include institutional humanitarian diplomacy, religious-legal mobilization, and emotionally charged digital activism.

A Sunni theological reading offers a useful caution in this setting. *Tatsabbut, wala’* and *bara’*, and the avoidance of *ghuluw* do not provide a simple verdict on every actor. Rather, they help distinguish sympathy for oppressed populations from uncritical endorsement of a political bloc. This distinction matters in Indonesia because the emotional force of Middle Eastern conflict can be translated into local polarization when digital circulation compresses historical nuance into slogans and short-form moral judgments. The challenge is not only to decide who is right in a conflict, but also to examine how external narratives shape domestic religious reasoning.

These dynamics point to the value of conflict literacy that combines theological caution with geopolitical awareness. Sunni theological literacy helps prevent the automatic treatment of every anti-Israeli or anti-Western actor as inherently legitimate. Geopolitical awareness, meanwhile, explains why energy prices, import structures, and shipping disruptions matter to Indonesian households and public policy. Together, these forms of literacy make it possible to support justice without collapsing complex conflicts into emotionally charged narratives that distort public reasoning or hide material consequences at home.

For Muslims in Indonesia, the conflict therefore has implications beyond sympathy for Palestine or positions toward Iran, Israel, and the United States. It also raises questions about public reasoning, doctrinal clarity, and awareness of how international conflict can affect domestic welfare through energy, logistics, and information flows. The Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict is better understood not only as a military confrontation, but also as a transnational discursive and economic event whose effects reach Muslim societies far beyond the immediate battlefield.

⁴⁰⁶ Aji Mustofa and Fuad Alfikri, “MUI Fatwa Authority: Social Movement to Boycott Israeli Products Through Instagram Social Media,” *Jurnal Analisa Sosiologi* 14, no. 2 (April 2025), <https://doi.org/10.20961/jas.v14i2.99200>.

D. CONCLUSION

The escalation of the Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict cannot be understood simply as a military confrontation between three major actors. The conflict also operates as a wider strategic environment in which narratives of resistance, religious legitimacy, and geopolitical rivalry intersect and produce effects far beyond the battlefield itself. The discussion in this article shows that the “axis of resistance” discourse functions not only as political rhetoric, but also as a claim to moral and religious authority that invites closer examination through Sunni theological concepts such as *tatsabbut*, *wala’* and *bara’*, and the avoidance of *ghuluw*. At the same time, the conflict places real strategic pressure on Gulf states through energy vulnerability, maritime insecurity, and market uncertainty, particularly because the Strait of Hormuz remains a crucial route for global oil and LNG flows. The implications of the conflict also extend to Muslims in Indonesia through two closely connected issues: energy dependence and the circulation of religious narratives in digital public space. Indonesia’s reliance on imported energy supplies, including crude oil connected to Middle Eastern routes, means that escalation in the Gulf can affect fuel prices, import security, and broader fiscal planning. Meanwhile, online religious discourse can reduce a complex regional conflict into emotionally charged binaries that leave little room for doctrinal or geopolitical nuance. These conditions highlight the importance of combining Sunni theological caution with geopolitical awareness when responding to international conflicts. Such an approach makes it possible to support justice and oppressed populations without automatically aligning with particular political blocs, while also maintaining doctrinal clarity and healthy public reasoning amid increasing polarization. The Iran–Israel–U.S. conflict, therefore, is better understood not only as a regional security crisis, but also as a transnational discursive and economic event whose effects reach Muslim societies well beyond the immediate zone of war.

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