

# Study Guide - Week 19

## *UNSC - War in Iran*

### 1) TLDR:

On February 28th 2026 the United States of America and Israel launched an airstrike attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran, targeting a number of military and civilian targets. As one of the primary objectives of those attacks, the Supreme Leader of Iran — Ali Khamenei, has been killed.

In retaliation, Iran has launched airstrikes against the state of Israel and the US allies in the region, which included: United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Iraq and Bahrain.

The attacks followed a continuous stream of reports, announced by the US and Israeli officials, alleging that Iran was developing nuclear weapons with the intention of using them against the US. Conflict in the region causes disruptions in the oil exports from Iran as well as stability of transports from other countries of the Persian Gulf. Shortages of supply, sky-rocketing prices, suffering of civilian population, exploding instability in the region and threat of another unresolved conflict that will plague us for decades in the future are looming over the UN once again.

### 2) Background:

The United States of America has been involved in the internal affairs of Iran at least since 1953. The Americans backed a UK-backed coup d'état aimed at deposing the Prime Minister and strengthening the near-authoritarian power of the Shah. Following the events of the coup in 1979, the Iranian population, who have grown tired of the oppressiveness of the Shah regime and its favoritism towards the western powers, brought forward a revolution that overthrew the Shah and instituted an the Islamic Republic.

In the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 1980s, the US provided aid and intelligence to Iraq provoking Iran to start involving itself in proxy wars in the region, challenging the American influence. Iran started funding organisations like Hezbollah and militias in Iraq to start conflicts with Israel and US-backed governments, involving itself in conflicts without official ties.

The conflict became more direct following the October 7th attacks in 2023 within Israel. This led to the 12-day war during which the US alongside Israel officially struck a number of targets in Iran, eliminating key military commanders and allegedly destroying facilities which were being used for the purposes of the Iranian nuclear weapons programme.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], there has been no evidence of Iran developing nuclear weapons. Following the airstrikes of 2025, the IAEA informed that Iran retained stockpiles of highly enriched uranium in its facilities and reiterated that there is no evidence of an organised nuclear weapons programme. The investigators could not confirm that the nuclear programme was maintained for entirely peaceful purposes as they were denied entry to some of the facilities.

In December of 2025 Iran was marked by an overwhelming number of anti-government protests. The protestors stood against the collapsing economy, plummeting position of the national currency, rising prices and spoke up in favor of a regime change. The government of Iran responded brutally to the protests, instituting mass arrests as well as allowing for usage of sharp ammunition against the protestors resulting in thousands of deaths. In January of 2026, the US communicated to Iran that they are ready to intervene in the situation in the country if the government persists in harming the peaceful protestors. This was followed by the deployment of 2 US aircraft carriers with their supporting fleets to the region.

In February 2026, US and Iran entered into negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme. The first round of negotiations took place in Muscat, Oman. The United States called for Iran to immediately stop enriching uranium and get rid of all the currently held stockpiles. Second round of negotiations followed in Geneva during which Oman's Foreign Affairs Minister announced that there has been a breakthrough with Iran agreeing to concessions.

Regardless of the negotiations on 28th of February 2026 US and Israel launched airstrikes on the territory of Iran. As a result of those strikes thousands of people involved in Iran's Students News Agency and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps have been reported dead. One among those who were targeted was the Supreme Leader of Iran — Ali Khamenei. In retaliation Iran attacked targets in Israel as well as neighbouring countries with US military bases involving at least 9 countries of the region in the conflict.

As part of the most recent developments, according to sources of i24 News and Jerusalem Post, forces of the Iranian-Kurdish groups have started a land-based offensive on the territory of Iran aimed at throwing over the government.

### **3) Key Issues:**

#### **3.1) Self-defence or Violation of Sovereignty?**

The United States claims they initiated the 'major combat operation' against Iran as a form of preemptive self-defence. The US administration has consequently released reports and claims that Iran was developing nuclear weapons in its secret facilities and that they were planning to use them to attack the US. The IAEA has repeatedly reported that there is no evidence of Iran using its nuclear programme for purposes other than civilian, noting that since the escalations in recent years they have been denied entry to part of the facilities. Iran and its allies claim that the US-Israeli operation is a violation of Iranian sovereignty as a nation and a violation of the inherent rights of the country under Article 2 of the UN Charter. They argue that their retaliatory attacks were supported by the right to self-defence. Is the US-Israeli operation justifiable as self-defence? Is the sovereignty of Iran violated by the actions of the US and Israel? Is Iran's response justifiable under Article 51 of the UN Charter?

### **3.2) Economic and resource instability**

Iran is one of the major oil exporters, providing around 3% of the world's daily supply. Disruption of deliveries from Iran poses a serious risk at destabilising the supply chain leading to not only an increase in prices but shortages in different regions of the world. Additionally, since the conflict stretches across the Persian Gulf, countries face complications regarding the extraction and refining of oil. Moreover, Iran has claimed it will be blockading the Strait of Hormuz, which usually sees around 20% of the global supply for oil passing through it every day. Such disruptions are estimated to lead to sky-rocketing oil prices, destabilization of supply chains and in some regions, wide-spread shortages. How can an oil crisis be prevented? How can shipping routes be secured to prevent supply shortages?

### **3.3) UNSC Effectiveness and Decision-Making**

The United Nations Security Council is tasked with maintaining international peace and stability. Over the years it was proven that the Security Council's decision-making capabilities, in regards to conflicts, have greatly decreased, especially if one of the P5 is involved. In situations as with Syria, Ukraine, Gaza Strip, etc. we have seen potential resolutions of the UN Security Council being vetoed or never being formally introduced due to a threat of a veto. The Security Council needs to consider whether countries involved in a conflict, including P5 members, should be able to block possible solutions. Should the UNSC start executing Article 27(3) towards all of its members? How can UNSC ensure that its primary function of maintaining peace is not hindered by political differences? What can the UN do to adapt to a reality with a growing number of conflicts around the world?

### **3.4) Stability of Iran Post-Conflict**

Even when the direct conflict stops, the Iranian population will still face a great many of risks. A number of facilities targeted in the attacks are essential to proper functioning of the civilian population. A great number of government and military officials have been assassinated by the US-Israeli strikes. Facilities necessary for Iran's primary industry — oil, have been destroyed and the Iranian economy is in a greater state of collapse than before. These are only a few of the issues that currently plague the people of Iran. How can UNSC ensure the safety of the civilians post-conflict? How can the Security Council help in just transformation of Iran, and help build a democratic country with respect to Human Rights, National Sovereignty and The Rule of Law? How can UNSC help in rebuilding the essential facilities that were destroyed in the military hostilities?

## **4) What can the UNSC actually do?**

The Security Council is the UN body tasked with the upkeep of international peace and security. Its role as an arbiter and ultimate judge in conflicts threatening international peace and stability has been clearly laid out in the UN Charter. It is also the only UN body whose decisions are legally binding upon all Member States (Art. 25 and 48 UN Charter) and have to be followed under threat of penalties from the Council including the use of force. In practice, the Security Council can do the following:

- Approve and mandate collective action (including military or technical missions) under Chapter VII
- Impose binding sanctions, resource obligations, or coordination mechanisms
- Deploy peacekeeping missions to crisis areas to help stabilize situations (in this scenario it can deploy peacekeepers to aid evacuation efforts)
- Resolve disputes between nations and propose binding compromises

## **5) Major Stakeholders:**

### **5.1) The US**

The United States of America puts the destruction of the Iranian Nuclear Programme as one of its primary objectives. The US Administration frequently stated that the current Iranian regime is an enemy of the United States and is an active threat to the safety of US citizens. In the debate, the US would defend its actions as being based on the principle of self-defence and support the position that its actions are aimed at defending the civilian population of Iran, suffering from the oppression of the Supreme Leader's regime.

### **5.2) Iran**

The Islamic Republic of Iran opposes the US-Israeli operation naming it a violation of its national and territorial sovereignty. Iran defends its right to develop a civilian oriented nuclear programme and reserves all rights to self defence as a response to the attacks from the US and Israel using their bases in allied states in the region. In the debate, Iran would call on the condemnation of the US attacks and reaffirming the national sovereignty of Iran. It would likely also pursue a UNSC order to Israel and the US to immediately stop all hostilities against Iran.

### **5.3) Israel**

Israel also argues that self-defence is the justification of its repeated strikes against Iran. History of consecutive missile strikes between the two countries, as well as Israel's war with Hezbollah, which is being funded by the government of Iran, led to Israel naming Iran an 'existential threat'. In the debate Israel would defend its right to self-defence and argue that actions in Iran were provoked by the threat Iran posed to Israeli national security. Additionally Israel would likely condemn the Iranian regime as undemocratic and oppressive to its civilian population.

### **5.4) Countries of the Gulf [UAE, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman]**

Countries of the Persian Gulf are mostly allied with the United States. They have become targets of Iranian missile and drone strikes in the past few days. This is because they house US, UK or French military bases on their territory which have been used as part of the US operations in the strike from 28th of February as well as the ongoing operations. In the debate, the countries would invoke that they have been unjustly attacked by Iran and invoke their right to retaliatory self-defence. Additionally, they would moderately support the US operation and argue for a quick resolution of the conflict and/or stabilisation of the sea shipment routes to minimise the effects of the export disruptions on their economies.

### **5.5) European States**

The majority of the European States moderately supports the US action in Iran. A number of European Countries opposed the Supreme Leader's regime and didn't recognise its legitimacy. France, UK and Germany have announced that they will use their military capabilities and necessary defensive measures to protect their people and military bases in the region, following the Iranian strikes on allies bases. The UK has stated that it is willing to deploy an aircraft carrier to assist their military in the defensive operations. France has openly stated that they recognize actions of the US in Iran as being 'outside international law'. In the debate European States would likely support a change of regime in Iran and urge for quick resolution of the conflict.

## 6) Sources and further reading:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026\\_Iran\\_war#](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Iran_war#)

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