



[Analysis on Whether or Not the U.S. Strikes Against Iran Were Legal Under International Law](#)

In the aftermath of the Trump administration's recent strikes on multiple nuclear sites in Iran, legal experts and commentators have provided their insight into the legitimacy – or lack thereof – of the United States' military actions. When looking into the elements surrounding the decision and the justification put forth for it, most legal observers have deemed that the strikes were illegal. Under the framework of the United Nations (UN) Charter, there are only two scenarios in which a nation can lawfully use force against another – with neither of these being present in the case of what transpired between the United States and Iran. These consist of either: 1) a UN Security Council authorization of force in exceptional circumstances to restore or maintain international peace and security or 2) the right of self-defense when one state is attacked by another. Additionally, there are serious issues with any attempts to make an argument for a “preemptive” or “deterrent” strike as well, given that there was no indication whatsoever of a potential imminent attack by Iran against the United States – something that would be needed in order to provide this type of reasoning.

As analysts have been quick to point out, an imminent threat from Iran warranting “preemptive” or “deterrent” U.S. action requires the former possessing nuclear weapons capability and the intent to use this. On this note, the global nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has consistently expressed that the Iranian regime lacks this – an important aspect that therefore dismisses any purported notion that preventative action is necessary or legal. The alleged rationale used in favor of the Trump administration's attacks is built on the falsehood that Iran is dangerously close to acquiring or already has nuclear weapons capabilities. Instead, fair and impartial entities understand that the truth of the matter is these inaccurate and reckless claims have been pushed for decades as an attempt to justify bellicose behavior against Iran. Perpetuating fallacies like this is harmful enough, but this is made all the more troubling by the fact that its use as “reasoning” for offensive military actions could also set a concerning precedent for similar potential future behavior by other countries too.

The highly problematic nature of the Trump administration's strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities has even compelled major U.S. allies such as France to remark about their unlawfulness. Earlier this week, French President Emmanuel Macron commented that they violated international law, adding that the United States lacked “a legal framework” for its military actions. For French officials and others, the only way to adequately rein in Iran's nuclear program is through diplomatic channels that culminate in a widely backed international agreement, as was the case with the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Ironically, the use of force against Iran could prove to be counterproductive as well, propelling the regime to pursue the very nuclear weapons that effective diplomacy was helping to curtail. The United Kingdom, Canada, the United Nations, and the European Union are among those that have joined France in urging for a return to the negotiating table.

The illegality of the recent attacks on Iran and concerns that they will drag the United States into yet another destructive war in the Middle East have garnered demonstrations across the country, with protesters condemning the airstrikes as violations of international law that threaten possible catastrophic consequences. Activists have accused President Trump of breaking campaign promises not to entangle the U.S. in unpredictable and costly foreign conflicts, outlining how his actions run counter to vows to end “forever” wars and be a peacemaker in the Middle East and elsewhere. They have also drawn attention to the alarming similarities in rhetoric between what is

taking place now and the lead up to the Iraq War back in the early 2000s when fearmongering over nonexistent “weapons of mass destruction” plunged the U.S. into a disastrous conflict in the region. Rather than directing efforts and resources towards actions that risk igniting a massive conflagration in the Middle East, responsible citizens are calling for the administration to focus on domestic priorities that impact everyday Americans.