

STUDY GUIDE



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY: EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION

Agenda: Deliberating on the current situation in Iran.

Freeze date: April 7th, 2026

Chairperson: Hitansh Kedia and Banhi Sen

INDEX

1	Chairperson's address.....	3
2	History and Governance.....	4
3	Voting and Roll Call.....	5
4	UNGA Ess Mandate.....	6
5	Chronological Order of Major Events.....	7-8
6	Background Of Agenda.....	9
7	The Start of the Conflict.....	10-13
8	The First Gulf War.....	14-18
9	The United States War on Terror Policy.....	19-22
10	The Second Gulf War.....	23-30
11	Lebanese Rebels.....	31
12	The 1983 Beirut Bombings.....	32
13	The Strait of Hormuz.....	33-39
14	Peace Process and Mutual History.....	40
15	Iran's Nuclear Issues.....	41-42
16	Economic Impact.....	43-45
17	Operation Epic Fury.....	46
18	Iran's Immediate Retaliation.....	47-48
19	Strategic Consequences and Aftermath.....	49-53
20	Closing Statement and Freeze Date.....	54
21	Sources.....	55

CHAIRPERSONS ADDRESS

Greetings Delegates!

On behalf of the Executive Board, I welcome you to the Emergency Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We live in a world where it has gotten more difficult to place trust in the authorities which govern and lead us every passing day. A world where the institutions we place faith in seem to collapse every hour. We occupy a phase in history where order is a thing of the past, and peace a far-fetched future. In this environment, where the human race is blindfolded and being led by the blindest of them all, we invite you, the delegates, to take a shot at making sense of the chaos your allotments have created. It is important to treat Model UNs as real simulations of world issues, no matter how trivial the exercise might feel at times. The goal for this Executive Board is not to determine the best delegate based on who has the loudest speeches, or whose communiques bomb the most countries; but to ensure that each delegate leaves the committee with a heightened understanding of what world diplomacy looks like in today's environment, and has the time of their lives doing it.

With that, I, Hitansh Kedia, along with my wonderful EB, wish you the best of luck, and as a famous philosopher once said, "Dude, like... oh my God, like... can we talk about like, the political and economic state of the world right now?"

Hitansh Kedia

Chairperson

UNGA-ESS

Committee email: ungaess.thsmun@gmail.com

HISTORY AND GOVERNANCE

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main policy-making organ of the Organisation. Comprising all Member States, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations. Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.

The UNGA also makes key decisions for the UN, including:

- Appointing the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Security Council
- Electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council
- Approving the UN budget

The legal foundation for the Emergency Special Session lies in Resolution 377 (V), known as the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution, adopted by the General Assembly on November 3, 1950. The resolution was created during the Cold War when the Soviet Union's repeated use of its veto power in the Security Council paralysed the UN's ability to respond to international crises, most immediately the Korean War. Resolution 377 established a direct mechanism to bypass Security Council deadlock: if any permanent member vetoes action on a matter involving a threat to peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly can convene an Emergency Special Session within 24 hours to consider the matter and make collective recommendations to member states. In extreme cases, these recommendations can include the use of armed force to restore international peace and security. In simple terms, the UNGA uses an ESS to make urgent recommendations to member states, including collective measures, and in extreme cases, even support for force to restore peace.

VOTING AND ROLL CALL

Methods of Decision: All procedural decisions, except for the closure of the debate, shall be made by a simple majority of the delegations present. Delegations physically present in the committee may not abstain from procedural motions. Decisions on draft resolutions and amendments shall require a simple majority in favour.

Voting Rights: Each present delegation shall have one vote. Observing nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) cannot vote on substantive matters. Each vote may be a Yes, No, or Abstain. On procedural motions, members may not abstain. Members “present and voting” shall be defined as members casting an affirmative or negative vote (no abstentions) on all substantive votes and not having the power to abstain from voting. While members “present” shall retain the power to either vote yes, no, or abstain. The doors during the voting procedure, and no secretariat board members shall be present during the voting procedure.

SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

Suspension Of The Rules: These rules may only be suspended following a majority vote. Any motion to suspend the rules is subject to the Chair’s discretion.

UNGA ESS MANDATE

Under the resolution 337A(V), "Uniting for peace", adopted by the General Assembly on 3 November 1950, an "emergency special session" can be convened within 24 hours:

"Resolves that if the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security. If not in session at the time, the General Assembly may meet in emergency special session within twenty-four hours of the request, therefore. Such an emergency special session shall be called if requested by the Security Council on the vote of any seven members, or by a majority of the Members of the United Nations".

The Assembly's main responsibilities include:

1. Electing members to key UN bodies and appointing the Secretary-General
2. Discussing global peace and security issues and making recommendations
3. Promoting human rights, international law, and global cooperation
4. Encouraging peaceful solutions to conflicts

If the Security Council cannot act due to disagreements, the Assembly can step in under the Uniting for Peace Resolution to recommend collective action to maintain peace. In simple terms, it's a global forum where countries come together to talk, plan, and guide collective action on the world's biggest issues.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF MAJOR EVENTS

1. **Founding of OPEC** — 1960 Established on September 14, 1960, in Baghdad, Iraq. Still active today.
2. **First Oil Shock** — 1973 started on October 17, 1973, with the Arab oil embargo. Ended March 18, 1974.
3. **Petrodollar Deal** — 1974 Signed between the US and Saudi Arabia in June 1974. Still the foundation of the global oil trade.
4. **Algiers Agreement (Iran-Iraq)** — 1975 Signed March 6, 1975. Cancelled by Saddam Hussein on September 17, 1980.
5. **Iranian Islamic Revolution** — 1979 began on January 7, 1978, with protests. Concluded February 11, 1979, when the Islamic Republic was declared.
6. **Second Oil Shock** — 1979 began in January 1979, following the Iranian Revolution. Eased by 1981.
7. **Iran-Iraq War** — 1980–1988 Started September 22, 1980, with Iraq's invasion of Iran. Ended August 20, 1988 with UN ceasefire Resolution 598.
8. **Hezbollah (Lebanese Rebels)** — 1982. Founded in 1982 during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Still active today.
9. **First Gulf War** — 1990–1991. It started on August 2, 1990, with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Ended February 28, 1991, with coalition ceasefire.
10. **9/11 Attacks** — 2001 Occurred on September 11, 2001. All four attacks took place between 8:46 AM and 10:03 AM on the same day.
11. **War on Terror Begins** — 2001 Declared by President Bush on September 20, 2001. The US invasion of Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001.
12. **Second Gulf War (Iraq Invasion)** — 2003 Started March 20, 2003, with the US-led invasion of Iraq. Major combat operations declared over May 1, 2003, though conflict continued until 2011.
13. **Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA)** — 2015 Signed July 14, 2015, in Vienna. Came into effect January 16, 2016.
14. **US Withdraws from JCPOA** — 2018 President Trump announced withdrawal on May 8, 2018. Sanctions restored by November 2018.

15. **Gaza War Begins** — 2023 started on October 7, 2023, with Hamas attacks on Israel. Ongoing.
16. **Iran-Israel Direct Strikes** — 2024 Iran launched its first direct drone and missile attack on Israel on April 13, 2024. Israel responded with strikes on April 19, 2024.
17. **Twelve-Day War** — June 2025 Started June 13, 2025, with Israeli strikes on Iranian military and nuclear facilities. Ended June 24, 2025, with a ceasefire.
18. **Current Iran Conflict (Operation Epic Fury)** — 2026 Started February 28, 2026, with joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Ongoing as of May 2026.

BACKGROUND OF THE AGENDA

The Middle East has long been one of the most politically sensitive and conflict-prone regions in the world, shaped by historical rivalries, foreign intervention, religious divisions, and competition for power and resources. Iran has played a central role in these tensions, especially after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which changed its relationship with Western countries and many of its regional neighbours.

Over the years, disagreements over Iran's nuclear programme, economic sanctions, and its influence through allied groups in countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Gaza have steadily increased tensions with Israel and the United States. As a result, the region has remained fragile, with repeated clashes and diplomatic breakdowns contributing to uncertainty and instability across the Middle East.

The current war represents a major escalation of these long-standing tensions, moving beyond proxy conflicts into direct military confrontation. Recent attacks on Iranian nuclear and military facilities by the United States and Israel were followed by retaliatory missile and drone strikes from Iran, raising fears of a wider regional conflict.

The war has not only caused military destruction but has also deeply affected civilians through displacement, economic hardship, and growing insecurity. In addition, disruptions to important oil trade routes have affected global energy prices and international markets, showing how conflicts in the Middle East can have consequences far beyond the region.

THE START OF THE CONFLICT

THE PETRODOLLAR ERA: THE SHAH'S MODERNISATION AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS (1953–1978)

SAVAK and Political Repression

The Shah strengthened his rule by creating SAVAK (an intelligence agency based in Iran) in 1957 with CIA and Mossad assistance. SAVAK became known for torture, surveillance, censorship, and crushing opposition. Iran effectively became a one-party state in 1975.

US Arms Deals and the “Gendarme of the Gulf”

Under the Nixon Doctrine, Iran became America's key ally in the Gulf. The Shah bought massive amounts of US weapons, making Iran one of the world's largest arms importers.

THE 1973 OIL SHOCK AND IRAN'S MILITARISED BOOM

After the 1973 oil crisis, Iran's oil revenues rose dramatically. The Shah launched huge industrial and military projects, hoping to make Iran a global power. However, inflation increased, inequality worsened, and heavy military spending continued despite economic problems. Many Iranians remained poor while elites benefited from oil wealth.

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION OF 1979

The Gathering Storm (1977–1978)

Economic problems, repression, and anger at Western influence united opposition groups against the Shah. Events like the Cinema Rex fire and Black Friday protests intensified unrest.

Khomeini's Return and the Fall of the Shah

The Shah fled Iran on January 16, 1979. Khomeini returned from exile on February 1, and soon the monarchy collapsed.

On April 1, 1979, Iran became the Islamic Republic under Khomeini's doctrine of Velayat-e-Faqih. Mandatory hijab laws were introduced, the Revolutionary Guards were created, and opposition groups were purged.

THE HOSTAGE CRISIS AND THE RUPTURE WITH THE UNITED STATES (1979–1981)

On November 4, 1979, Islamist students seized the US Embassy in Tehran and took 52 Americans hostage, demanding the Shah's return. Khomeini supported the takeover, strengthening hardliners. The crisis lasted 444 days and deeply damaged US-Iran relations. Diplomatic ties were cut in 1980 and have never been restored.

POST-WAR IRAN: RECONSTRUCTION, REFORM, AND HARDLINE RESURGENCE (1988–2004)

Rafsanjani and Reconstruction (1989–1997)

President Rafsanjani focused on rebuilding Iran's economy and increasing regional influence while facing growing US sanctions.

Khatami and the Reform Movement (1997–2005)

Reformist president Mohammad Khatami promoted civil society and openness, but unelected institutions blocked major reforms. Student protests in 1999 were violently crushed.

Ahmadinejad and Confrontation (2005–2013)

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad adopted a hardline approach, expanded the nuclear programme, and increased tensions with the West.

THE GREEN MOVEMENT (2009) AND THE FAILED HOPE OF REFORM

After the disputed 2009 election, millions protested under the Green Movement, demanding political reform. Security forces violently crushed demonstrations, arrested thousands, and placed opposition leaders under house arrest. Many Iranians lost faith in reform through elections.

SANCTIONS, STUXNET, AND THE ROAD TO THE JCPOA (2010–2015)

Heavy sanctions damaged Iran's economy, reducing oil exports and collapsing the rial. In 2015, Iran signed the JCPOA nuclear deal, agreeing to limit its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

TRUMP'S WITHDRAWAL, MAXIMUM PRESSURE, AND ESCALATION (2018–2024)

In 2018, President Trump withdrew the US from the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions through a "maximum pressure" campaign. Iran resumed nuclear activities. In 2020, the US killed General Qasem Soleimani, sharply escalating tensions. Proxy conflicts and cyberattacks increased across the region.

THE WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM MOVEMENT (2022–2023)

In September 2022, Mahsa Amini died after being arrested by Iran's morality police. Her death triggered nationwide protests under the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom." Women burned hijabs, students protested, and demonstrations spread across Iran. The government responded with violence, executions, arrests, and internet shutdowns. Although the regime survived, fear of the state weakened significantly.

TWELVE-DAY WAR AND THE DECEMBER 2025 UPRISING

Iran's Weakening Regional Position (2023–2025)

Following regional conflicts after October 2023, Iran's allies weakened, Hezbollah leaders were killed, and Syria's Assad government collapsed.

The Twelve-Day War (June 2025)

In June 2025, Israel launched major strikes on Iran's nuclear and military sites. Iran retaliated with missiles and drones. On June 22, the US joined the conflict, striking Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. A ceasefire ended the war on June 24.

The Economic Collapse and December 2025 Protests

The war worsened Iran's economic crisis. Inflation soared, the rial collapsed, and shortages spread. In December 2025, nationwide protests erupted, demanding the end of the Islamic Republic. The government used internet blackouts and lethal force to crush demonstrations. By May 2026, protests had largely been suppressed, but Iran's economic and political crises remained unresolved.

THE FIRST GULF WAR

THE ROAD TO THE FIRST GULF WAR

The 1979 Iranian Revolution

In late 1978, Iran descended into revolutionary upheaval. Mass protests against Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi spread across the country, and crucially, Iran's oil workers joined the strikes. In the space of five days spanning late December 1978, production collapsed from 6.5 million barrels a day to barely 700,000, effectively halting exports entirely. The Shah fled into exile on 16 January 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini returned from Paris two weeks later, and the Islamic Republic was born.

The economic consequences were immediate and severe. Over the full 1978–1981 period, the average daily loss reached 3.9 million barrels, with the initial supply shock wiping out nearly 90% of Iran's total output. What transformed a supply disruption into a global crisis was panic. Crude oil prices more than doubled between April 1979 and April 1980, with spot prices reaching \$50 a barrel at their peak, driven not by actual scarcity but by speculative hoarding and fear of further instability. Long queues formed at petrol stations across the United States and Western Europe. The second major oil shock of the 20th century had arrived six years after the first.

The deeper strategic significance lay in the petrodollar system, the arrangement by which global oil sales were conducted in US dollars, tying American financial dominance directly to stability in the Gulf. Khomeini's new Islamic Republic, aggressively anti-American and committed to purging Western influence from Iran, threatened that arrangement fundamentally.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)

On 22 September 1980, Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Iran, calculating that post-revolutionary chaos had left the country militarily exposed. The calculation proved catastrophically wrong. What followed was eight years of attritional warfare trench lines, chemical weapons attacks, massed infantry assaults, and

missile strikes on civilian cities that drew widespread comparisons to the First World War in its brutality and stalemate. Total casualties ranged from one million to two million. The number killed on both sides was perhaps 500,000, with Iran suffering the greatest losses. Iraq did not fight this war alone. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf Arab states openly financed the Iraqi war effort to the sum of approximately \$60 billion. The United States and the Soviet Union provided tacit backing. Iran's only significant allies were Syria and Libya. The war had a profound long-term effect on both states: in Iran, it entrenched hardline institutions like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC); in Iraq, it left Saddam Hussein commanding a million-strong, battle-hardened army — and carrying a debt he could not repay.

The Tanker War (1984–1988)

As the ground war settled into a stalemate, both sides escalated into the Persian Gulf. In 1984, Iraq now equipped with French-supplied Super Etendard aircraft armed with Exocet anti-ship missiles began systematically attacking Iranian oil tankers and striking Iran's main export terminal at Kharg Island. The strategic objective was clear: destroy Iran's oil revenues and strangle its war economy. Iran retaliated by targeting vessels serving Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the states bankrolling Iraq's military.

The scale of the assault on commercial shipping was extraordinary. By the end of 1987, Iraq had conducted 283 attacks on shipping and Iran 168. Combined, those attacks killed 116 merchant sailors, with 37 more missing and 167 wounded from dozens of nationalities. Commercial shipping through the Gulf dropped by 25%. Insurance premiums surged. The world watched the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway through which roughly a fifth of global oil supply passed with increasing alarm.

Iran repeatedly threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz entirely. It never followed through. The reason was strategic self-interest: Iran depended on those same sea routes lanes to export the oil, funding its own war effort.

Operation Earnest Will (1987)

America Enters the Fray Kuwait, suffering repeated Iranian attacks on its tankers, made a calculated diplomatic move in late 1986: it appealed simultaneously to both the United States and the Soviet Union for protection, forcing Cold War rivals to compete for influence in the Gulf. The Soviets responded first. The Americans, unwilling to cede strategic ground to Moscow, committed decisively. In July 1987, President Reagan launched Operation Earnest Will the largest American naval convoy operation since the Second World War placing Kuwaiti tankers under the US flag and US Navy escort.

The scale of the US commitment was substantial. Over fourteen months, 30 US Navy warships rotated through the Gulf, hunting Iranian mine-layers, conducting special operations strikes, and escorting tanker convoys through contested waters. On the very first escort mission, a reflagged Kuwaiti tanker struck an Iranian mine, a signal of what the operation would entail. The United States had entered a direct military confrontation with Iran. In April 1988, the USS Samuel B. Roberts struck an Iranian mine east of Bahrain, blowing a hole in its hull and injuring 10 sailors. The US retaliated with Operation Praying Mantis destroying Iranian oil platforms, sinking Iranian warships, and significantly degrading Iran's ability to threaten Gulf shipping. It was the largest American naval surface engagement since the Second World War.

Iran Air Flight 655

290 Dead and an Unhealed Wound On 3 July 1988, Iran Air Flight 655 , a civilian Airbus A300 operating a scheduled service from Tehran to Dubai took off from Bandar Abbas and climbed normally through Iranian airspace. All 290 people aboard, including 66 children, were killed when the USS Vincennes fired two surface-to-air missiles at the aircraft, misidentifying it as an attacking F-14 fighter jet.

Subsequent investigations established that Flight 655 had been ascending, not descending, toward the ship. It was in the correct civilian air corridor, squawking standard civilian identification codes throughout. The Vincennes had itself been inside Iranian territorial waters when it opened fire. The US government described the incident as a tragic accident and ultimately agreed to pay \$61.8

million in compensation to victims' families, without formally acknowledging wrongdoing. The crew of the Vincennes received combat medals.

In Iran, the incident was widely perceived as deliberate American aggression, reinforcing the view that the United States was actively aligned with Iraq against the Islamic Republic. Critically, it accelerated Iran's decision to accept a ceasefire. A war-weary Iran, now fearing full US military entry into the conflict, accepted UN Security Council Resolution 598. The ceasefire came into force on 20 August 1988.

The Invasion of Kuwait

The ceasefire left Iraq in a position that made further conflict almost structurally inevitable. Saddam commanded over one million experienced soldiers, 5,500 tanks and 500 aircraft, and carried a debt of approximately \$80 billion accumulated during the Iran-Iraq War. Iraq owed some \$37 billion to Gulf creditors alone, with approximately \$14–15 billion owed specifically to Kuwait. Saddam argued that the loans should be treated as payment for Iraq having shielded the Arabian Peninsula from Iranian expansionism. Kuwait rejected this framing and refused to write off the debt.

The oil price dimension made the situation explosive. By mid-1990, crude prices had fallen from \$20 to as low as \$12 a barrel. Iraq blamed Kuwait's persistent overproduction above its OPEC quota directly. Saddam publicly called it "economic warfare" against Iraq in May 1990. Iraq also accused Kuwait of slant drilling from the shared Rumayla oil field to steal Iraqi petroleum, and demanded Kuwait cede the strategically significant Bubiyan and Warbah islands at the head of the Gulf, which would have given Iraq direct, secure access to deep water. Arab mediators attempted to resolve the crisis. As late as 31 July 1990, Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials met in Jeddah. Saddam publicly stated he would not use military force. He had already given the order to invade.

At 2 am on 2 August 1990, four elite Republican Guard divisions crossed into Kuwait simultaneously, supported by helicopter gunships and strike aircraft. Within one hour, Iraqi armour had reached Kuwait City. By daybreak, tanks were attacking Dasman Palace, the royal residence. Kuwait's ruler, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, had already fled to Saudi Arabia. His half-brother, Sheikh Fahd, stayed behind to defend the palace and was shot dead. Within hours, the capital of a sovereign nation had fallen. Iraq declared Kuwait its 19th province and

renamed Kuwait City “al-Kadhima.”

The international response was the fastest and most unified since the Second World War. The UN Security Council condemned the invasion unanimously on the same day. By mid-November 1990, the US had deployed over 240,000 troops to the Gulf with another 200,000 en route. Britain contributed 25,000, Egypt 20,000, France 5,500 , a coalition of 42 nations in total. On 17 January 1991, Operation Desert Storm began. A 43-day air campaign followed by a 100-hour ground offensive expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait by 28 February 1991.

THE UNITED STATES WAR ON TERROR POLICY

The September 11 Attacks and the Declaration of the War on Terror

On September 11, 2001, nineteen operatives of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network carried out four coordinated attacks on the United States, killing approximately 3,000 people and injuring thousands more. Two hijacked aircraft were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, one into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a fourth, believed to be targeting either the United States Capitol or the White House, crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers attempted to overpower the hijackers.

The attacks were the deadliest act of terrorism ever carried out on American soil and constituted the single largest loss of life on United States territory since the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941. Within nine days, President George W. Bush addressed a joint session of Congress and formally declared a global War on Terror, stating that the United States would make no distinction between terrorist organisations and the nations that harboured them. This declaration fundamentally and permanently altered the direction of American foreign policy.

The Legal Framework

Authorisation for Use of Military Force (2001) On September 18, 2001, the United States Congress passed the Authorisation for Use of Military Force, commonly referred to as the AUMF. This legislation granted the President of the United States broad and largely open-ended authority to use all necessary and appropriate force against any nations, organisations, or individuals that the President determined had planned, authorised, committed, or aided the September 11 attacks, or that had harboured such organisations. The AUMF was significant not only for what it authorised immediately but for the extraordinarily wide legal framework it created. It did not name a specific country, it did not specify a geographical boundary, and it did not define an end condition. In practical terms, it gave the executive branch of the United States government the legal authority to conduct military operations almost anywhere in the world, indefinitely, against an enemy that was defined by ideology rather than by borders. Legal scholars and international observers have noted that the

AUMF remains one of the broadest grants of military authority in American legislative history and continues to serve as the legal basis for United States counterterrorism operations to this day.

The Invasion of Afghanistan and the Dismantling of Al-Qaeda's Base (2001)

The first direct military action under the War on Terror was the invasion of Afghanistan, launched on October 7, 2001, under the codename Operation Enduring Freedom. The Taliban regime, which governed Afghanistan, had provided Al-Qaeda with sanctuary, training facilities, and operational freedom for years. The United States demanded that the Taliban surrender Osama bin Laden and dismantle Al-Qaeda's infrastructure. The Taliban refused. The subsequent military campaign, conducted alongside the United Kingdom and Afghan opposition forces known as the Northern Alliance, rapidly dismantled the Taliban government. Kabul fell in November 2001. Al-Qaeda's primary training infrastructure in Afghanistan was destroyed, and its leadership was dispersed.

Osama bin Laden himself evaded capture and fled to Pakistan, where he remained in hiding until he was located and killed by United States special operations forces in Abbottabad in May 2011. The Afghanistan campaign was internationally supported, legally grounded, and largely considered a justified military response. However, the country descended into a prolonged insurgency that lasted two decades, ending with the complete withdrawal of United States forces in August 2021 and the return of the Taliban to power, raising profound questions about the long-term effectiveness of military intervention as a counterterrorism strategy.

The Bush Doctrine and Preemptive Military Action

The Bush Doctrine was formally articulated in the United States National Security Strategy published in September 2002. It established three core principles that guided American foreign policy for the following decade. The first was preemption: the United States would act militarily against threats before they fully materialised rather than waiting to be attacked. The second was unilateralism: the United States would act alone if necessary, without waiting for international consensus or United Nations authorisation. The third was primacy: the United States would maintain military superiority sufficient to deter any

potential rival from challenging American power globally.

In the context of the Middle East, these principles translated directly into an environment where military intervention was not a last resort but a policy instrument that could be deployed against any government or organisation that the United States deemed threatening. Iran interpreted the Bush Doctrine as an existential warning. Having watched the United States invade Afghanistan on its eastern border in 2001 and Iraq on its western border in 2003, Iran's government concluded that developing a credible deterrent, including the acceleration of its nuclear programme, was a strategic necessity for national survival.

The War on Terror and Iran: Designation, Sanctions, and Escalation

Although Iran was not a participant in the September 11 attacks and Al-Qaeda, a Sunni extremist organisation, was ideologically opposed to Iran's Shia Islamic government, the War on Terror framework had direct and severe consequences for Iran. The United States designated Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism, a status it had held since 1984, and significantly expanded sanctions pressure under the War on Terror framework. Iran's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and various Shia militia groups across the region was cited as evidence of its role in sustaining regional terrorism. The Axis of Evil designation placed Iran under sustained diplomatic and military pressure at precisely the moment when its nuclear programme was becoming internationally visible. In 2002, an Iranian opposition group publicly revealed the existence of secret nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak, triggering an international crisis that the War on Terror framework made considerably more dangerous. The combination of military encirclement, economic sanctions, and nuclear confrontation created the strategic environment from which the current conflict directly emerges.

The Long-Term Consequences of the War on Terror for the Middle East

The War on Terror reshaped the Middle East in ways that extended far beyond its original scope. The United States military presence in the region expanded dramatically, with bases established in Afghanistan, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. This encirclement deepened Iranian hostility and reinforced the Islamic Republic's argument that the United States sought regime change in Tehran as a long-term objective. The policy also had significant unintended consequences. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, conducted under the War

on Terror framework, removed Iran's primary regional adversary and created a Shia-dominated Iraqi government aligned with Tehran. The destabilisation of Libya, Syria, and Yemen in the years that followed created power vacuums that Iran exploited through its network of proxy forces. Perhaps most significantly, the War on Terror militarised an entire generation of American foreign policy, establishing the template of intervention, sanction, and regime pressure that continues to define the United States relationship with Iran to this day.

THE SECOND GULF WAR

THE INVASION OF IRAQ AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (2003 TO 2011)

The Case for War: (2002 to 2003)

Following the September 11 attacks and the successful military campaign in Afghanistan, the Bush administration turned its attention to Iraq with increasing urgency. The administration built its public case for military action on two principal claims: that Saddam Hussein's government possessed active weapons of mass destruction programmes, including chemical, biological, and potentially nuclear capabilities, and that the Iraqi government had connections to terrorist networks, including Al-Qaeda.

Both claims were subsequently proven to be without a credible foundation. The intelligence assessments underpinning these claims were produced under significant political pressure and were later described by senior officials within the CIA and the British intelligence services as having been shaped to support a predetermined policy conclusion rather than to reflect actual evidence. On February 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell presented the United States government's case before the United Nations Security Council, displaying satellite imagery, communications intercepts, and eyewitness testimony that he argued demonstrated Iraq's active weapons programmes.

The presentation was widely covered globally and was treated as authoritative at the time. Every substantive claim Powell made was subsequently found to be inaccurate. France, Germany, Russia, and China all opposed military action, arguing that United Nations weapons inspectors should be given more time to complete their work. Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector, reported that his teams had found no evidence of active weapons programmes. The United States and the United Kingdom proceeded regardless, assembling a coalition without Security Council authorisation.

The Invasion: Operation Iraqi Freedom (March to May 2003)

On March 20, 2003, United States and United Kingdom forces launched the invasion of Iraq under the codename Operation Iraqi Freedom. The campaign opened with an air offensive designed to destroy Iraqi command infrastructure, communications networks, and military capacity rapidly. Ground forces advanced simultaneously from Kuwait, moving toward Baghdad across hundreds of miles of desert terrain.

The Iraqi conventional military, weakened by over a decade of international sanctions and significantly degraded by the 1991 Gulf War, offered limited organised resistance. Baghdad fell on April 9, 2003. The moment was marked globally by the televised toppling of a large statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos Square, an image that became one of the defining visual records of the conflict. Saddam Hussein evaded capture and went into hiding. He was eventually found concealed in an underground hideout near his hometown of Tikrit on December 13, 2003, arrested without resistance, tried by an Iraqi court for crimes against humanity, and executed by hanging on December 30, 2006.

On May 1, 2003, President Bush delivered a speech from the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln beneath a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," declaring that major combat operations in Iraq had ended. It was a declaration that would become one of the most heavily criticised statements in the history of American foreign policy. The mission had not been accomplished. It had barely begun.

The Dissolution of the State and the Architecture of Chaos (2003 to 2004)

The military defeat of Saddam Hussein's government was achieved in weeks. The governance of Iraq that followed was catastrophic. The Coalition Provisional Authority, established by the United States to administer Iraq during the transition period, made two decisions in May 2003 that have been identified by historians, military analysts, and former officials alike as among the most consequential policy errors of the post-Cold War era. The first was the dissolution of the Iraqi Army.

Approximately 400,000 soldiers were dismissed, stripped of income, denied benefits, and returned to their communities with their weapons, their training, and their grievances intact. The second was the de-Baathification order, which removed all members of Saddam Hussein's ruling Ba'ath Party from positions in government, the civil service, educational institutions, and public administration. Because membership in the Ba'ath Party had been effectively required for professional advancement under Saddam's government, the order removed enormous numbers of experienced administrators, doctors, engineers, and teachers from public life. Iraq was simultaneously stripped of the capacity to defend itself and the capacity to govern itself.

The consequences were immediate. Looting spread across the country. Government ministries were stripped bare. Museums were ransacked. Hospitals ran without staff. The infrastructure collapsed. And in the political vacuum, sectarian identities that Saddam Hussein's authoritarian state had suppressed through violence for decades erupted into the open with devastating force.

The Insurgency, Sectarian War, and the Human Cost (2004 to 2008)

The armed insurgency that developed in Iraq from 2004 onward was not a single unified movement but a collection of overlapping conflicts with distinct actors, motivations, and methods. Former Ba'athist military officers and Sunni Arab nationalists fought the occupation as a matter of political survival. Islamist extremists, most significantly Al-Qaeda in Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, pursued a dual strategy of attacking occupation forces and deliberately inflaming sectarian tensions by targeting Shia civilians, religious leaders, and holy sites. Shia militias, many trained, armed, and funded by Iran, fought both the Sunni insurgency and each other for political dominance in the emerging post-Saddam order.

The bombing of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra on February 22, 2006, one of the most sacred sites in Shia Islam, triggered a wave of retaliatory massacres and counter-massacres that brought Iraq to the edge of full civil war. Baghdad, once one of the Arab world's great cities, became divided into sectarian enclaves separated by concrete blast walls. Bodies appeared daily in the streets and rivers. Over three million Iraqis fled their homes, either displaced internally or as refugees in Jordan, Syria, and other neighbouring countries.

Credible estimates of Iraqi civilian deaths during the conflict range from 150,000 to over 600,000, though the true figure remains disputed. The human cost of the invasion and occupation was borne overwhelmingly by the Iraqi civilian population.

The Surge, Strategic Reassessment, and Withdrawal (2007 to 2011).

By 2006, the United States government acknowledged internally that its strategy in Iraq was failing. Violence was increasing, the Iraqi security forces were unable to operate independently, and public support for the war in the United States had collapsed. In January 2007, President Bush announced a change in strategy, deploying an additional 30,000 troops and implementing a revised counterinsurgency doctrine developed by General David Petraeus that prioritised protecting the civilian population over pursuing and killing insurgents.

The strategy also involved paying Sunni tribal leaders and former insurgents to switch sides and fight Al-Qaeda in Iraq, a programme known as the Awakening. Violence decreased significantly during 2007 and 2008. However, the reduction in violence did not resolve the underlying political conflicts. President Obama, elected in 2008 on a commitment to ending the Iraq War, negotiated the Status of Forces Agreement with the Iraqi government and withdrew the last United States combat troops in December 2011.

The withdrawal left behind an Iraqi state that remained deeply fragile, a security apparatus penetrated by Iranian-backed networks, and a Sunni population that felt systematically excluded from political power and deeply resentful of both the Baghdad government and its Iranian patrons.

The Rise of ISIS and the Collapse of the Post-Invasion Order (2013 to 2017)

The political and sectarian conditions created by the invasion and occupation of Iraq provided the environment from which the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, known as ISIS, emerged as one of the most destructive non-state actors of the twenty-first century. ISIS developed from the remnants of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, incorporating the organisational capacity of former Ba'athist military and intelligence officers who brought professional military expertise to what had previously been primarily an ideologically driven organisation. Taking advantage of the civil war in Syria after 2011 and the sectarian marginalisation of Iraq's Sunni population under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government, ISIS expanded rapidly.

In June 2014, ISIS seized Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, with a force of approximately 1,500 fighters that routed an Iraqi army division of 30,000 troops. The collapse of the Iraqi military in Mosul was not merely a military failure. It was the visible consequence of a decade of sectarian manipulation, institutional corruption, and the hollowing out of the Iraqi state. At its territorial peak, ISIS governed an area comparable in size to the United Kingdom, declared a caliphate, and conducted systematic mass atrocities, including genocide against the Yazidi people, enslavement of women and children, and the destruction of ancient cultural heritage sites. The rise of ISIS required the United States to return military forces to Iraq in 2014, extending the consequences of the 2003 invasion by more than a decade.

The Enduring Legacy and Its Direct Connection to the Current Situation in Iran

The Second Gulf War's consequences did not end with the territorial defeat of ISIS in 2017 or the formal conclusion of the United States military presence in Iraq. They continue to shape every dimension of the current situation with Iran that this committee is convened to address.

The destruction of Iraq as a functioning state and conventional military power removed the primary constraint on Iranian regional expansion and enabled Iran to build the network of armed proxy organisations across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen that defines its current strategic posture. The war reinforced Iranian conviction that nuclear deterrence was essential to national survival, directly accelerating the development of the nuclear programme that became the central point of international confrontation.

The collapse of Western credibility following the failure to find weapons of mass destruction made building international consensus on Iran's actual nuclear activities significantly more difficult. The land corridor that Iran now uses to supply Hezbollah runs through Iraqi territory that Iranian-backed militias effectively control. And the broader destabilisation of the region created the conditions in which the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Gaza developed, each of which involves Iranian participation and each of which forms part of the backdrop to the current crisis.

The Second Gulf War is not a history that has concluded. It is the structural foundation of the situation that this committee exists to address.

Iran's Strategic Transformation: The Unintended Beneficiary (2003 to 2011)

Among the most significant consequences of the Second Gulf War was the dramatic expansion of Iranian power and influence across the Middle East, a development that was entirely unintended by the United States but was both predictable and predicted by regional analysts at the time. For the preceding two decades, Saddam Hussein's Iraq had served as the primary counterweight to Iranian regional ambition. The two countries had fought a devastating eight-year war from 1980 to 1988, and Iraq's conventional military capability had effectively contained Iranian power projection westward.

The removal of Saddam Hussein's government eliminated this constraint. Iran's response was immediate, sophisticated, and highly effective. Iranian intelligence networks had extensive relationships with Iraqi Shia political movements and religious organisations that had operated in exile in Iran during the Saddam years. These networks were activated rapidly after the invasion. Iran funded, trained, and armed multiple Shia militia organisations, most significantly the Badr Organisation, which had been formed and trained in Iran, and the Mahdi Army of Muqtada al-Sadr.

These organisations operated simultaneously as political parties, social welfare providers, and armed militias, giving Iran deep structural influence within Iraqi society rather than merely military leverage. Iraq's elections in 2005 produced a Shia-dominated government with strong institutional ties to Tehran. Within two years of the United States invasion, Iraq had been transformed from Iran's primary adversary into a country whose government was aligned with Iranian interests. Iran had gained more from the Second Gulf War than any party that actually participated in it.

LEBANESE REBELS

Origins (1982)

Lebanon's civil war had been raging since 1975, leaving the country fractured and its Shia population, the largest religious group, politically marginalised and economically neglected. When Israel invaded Lebanon on 6 June 1982 to expel Palestinian fighters, Iran saw its opportunity. Within weeks, Iran dispatched 1,500 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps advisers to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, with Syrian permission, to recruit, train and unify various Shia factions into a single Iran-directed organisation. That organisation was named Hezbollah, meaning "Party of God," at Khomeini's instruction. It was explicitly modeled on the Iranian Islamic Republic and pledged allegiance to Iran's Supreme Leader. Its founding 1985 manifesto called for the expulsion of Western forces from Lebanon, the destruction of Israel, and the establishment of an Islamic state on the Iranian model.

THE 1983 BEIRUT BOMBINGS

Hezbollah's first major act was devastating. On 18 April 1983, a suicide bomber destroyed the US Embassy in West Beirut, killing 63 people, including 17 Americans. Six months later, on 23 October 1983, a truck carrying 12,000 pounds of TNT was driven into the US Marine Corps barracks at Beirut Airport, killing 241 American servicemen, the deadliest day for the Marine Corps since Iwo Jima in 1945. Minutes later, a second bomber killed 58 French paratroopers nearby. Declassified intelligence confirmed the attacks were carried out at Iran's direct command. A US federal judge formally ruled in 2003 that Iran had directed the operation. A US District Court ordered Iran to pay \$2.65 billion in compensation in 2007. The bombings forced the complete withdrawal of the US-led multinational peacekeeping force from Lebanon by February 1984.

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE TO IRAN

Iran built Hezbollah for three interconnected reasons: to project power into the Arab world, to maintain a permanent military threat against Israel on its northern border, and to deter US or Israeli military action against Iran itself. As one analyst at the Institute for National Security Studies explained, Iran "sees the organisation as the main factor that will deter Israel or the US from going to war against Iran and works tirelessly to build the organisation's power." Hezbollah also served as Iran's template for building proxy forces elsewhere — directly training Iraqi Shia militias through Unit 3800 from 2003, groups credited with killing hundreds of US servicemen during the Iraq War.

STRAIT OF HORMUZ



GEOGRAPHY

The Strait of Hormuz is the only sea passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It is approximately 104 miles long, with a width at its narrowest point of just 21 miles. Iran sits on its northern coast; the Musandam Peninsula of Oman occupies the south. The shipping lanes run primarily through Omani territorial waters, partially through Iranian waters, and are governed by international maritime law under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The numbers that define its global importance are staggering. In 2024, an average of 20 million barrels of oil per day passed through the strait roughly 20% of global petroleum consumption. By 2025, nearly 15 million barrels per day of crude oil alone transited the waterway, representing approximately 34% of all global crude oil trade. Around one-fifth of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade also passes through it annually, primarily from Qatar.

The International Energy Agency confirmed in 2025 that flows through the Strait of Hormuz make up more than one-quarter of total global seaborne oil trade. More than 30,000 vessels transit it each year. It is the primary and, for many countries, the only maritime export route for Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain and Iran. For Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE, there is no viable alternative. Only Saudi Arabia and the UAE possess operational pipelines capable of bypassing the strait, with a combined available capacity of approximately 3.5 to 5.5 million barrels per day far short of what the strait carries. Any significant disruption would produce immediate global price shocks and physical supply shortages.

THE 1979 REVOLUTION- IRAN CLAIMS THE STRAIT

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 fundamentally reordered the geopolitics of the Strait of Hormuz. The Islamic Republic declared itself the dominant power in the Gulf and crucially claimed authority over the strait as part of its national sovereignty and strategic identity. From 1979 onward, Hormuz became not merely a trade route but a geopolitical instrument: a lever Iran could theoretically pull to inflict economic pain on the West, its Gulf Arab neighbours, and Asian importers dependent on Gulf crude.

This shift embedded a new category of risk into global oil markets. Hormuz risk was no longer purely military; it included ideology, sanctions, and asymmetric pressure tactics. The Iran-Iraq War of 1980 -1988 rapidly converted that theoretical risk into operational reality. Iraq attacked Iranian oil tankers and the Kharg Island export terminal from 1984, forcing Iran into retaliatory attacks on Gulf Arab shipping. Naval mines were laid.

The US intervened with Operation Earnest Will in 1987, the largest naval convoy operation since the Second World War, to escort Kuwaiti tankers through the strait. The USS Samuel B. Roberts struck an Iranian mine in 1988; US Operation Praying Mantis followed, destroying Iranian oil platforms and warships. The Tanker War demonstrated that the strait could be functionally disrupted through risk and insurance dynamics even without a formal closure — shipping insurers raised premiums dramatically, and commercial traffic dropped sharply even while the physical waterway remained technically open.

WHO CONTROLS THE STRAIT- THE LEGAL AND MILITARY REALITY

Under international maritime law and UNCLOS, the shipping lanes of the Strait of Hormuz are governed by the right of transit passage, meaning all ships, civilian and military, have the right to pass freely. The shipping lanes run primarily through Omani territorial waters and partially through Iranian waters. Formally, no single nation “owns” the strait.

In practice, geography gives Iran a commanding advantage. Iran’s northern coastline runs the full length of the strait. Its naval bases, missile systems, and IRGC fast-attack boat networks are positioned directly along the waterway. The islands of Qeshm, Hormuz, Hengam and Larak, all Iranian, sit at the strait’s entrance, providing staging points for military operations.

Britannica notes that Iran’s powerful naval force has the ability to exert significant control over the strait. The depth of the strait between 200 and 330 feet throughout much of its width does make a prolonged physical closure difficult for any power, including Iran. But “difficult” is not “impossible,” and Iran’s asymmetric capabilities mines, drones, fast boats, shore-based missiles make threatening the strait considerably easier than closing it outright.

The US counterweight is the Fifth Fleet, headquartered in Bahrain, which bears primary responsibility for protecting freedom of navigation through the strait. The International Maritime Security Construct, a multinational naval coalition, also patrols the waterway.

THE STRAIT TODAY — 2026 AND THE MOST SERIOUS CLOSURE IN HISTORY

The Strait of Hormuz entered the most critical phase of its modern history in February 2026, when the United States and Israel launched military operations against Iran, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Iran's response was immediate and historic: on 28 February 2026, the IRGC formally closed the Strait of Hormuz, the first time in history that the waterway has been physically closed to general shipping. The IRGC laid sea mines throughout the strait, deployed fast-attack boats, and issued warnings forbidding passage without IRGC clearance. IRGC Navy official Mohammad Akbarzadeh stated that "the Strait of Hormuz is under the complete control of the Islamic Republic's Navy." Iran subsequently announced a new body, the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, to formalise its control, requiring all vessels intending to transit the strait to obtain prior clearance from Iranian forces. Reports indicated Iran was charging up to \$2 million per vessel for passage. Al Jazeera described the result as a "phantom blockade", a condition in which legal and financial barriers prevented vessel movement even in the absence of total physical obstruction. Within 48 hours of the closure, the world's largest marine insurance mutuals issued cancellation notices for war risk coverage in the Gulf. Commodity traders lined up \$7 billion in emergency credit to avoid forced liquidations. European banks refused letters of credit for Hormuz-dependent cargoes. Brent crude oil prices rose above \$82 a barrel, the highest level in years. Approximately 3,200 ships, representing roughly 4% of global ship tonnage, sat idle in the Gulf. The International Energy Agency confirmed that nearly 15 million barrels per day of crude oil, 34% of global crude trade — had been disrupted. Qatar's LNG exports, representing approximately 20% of global LNG trade, were simultaneously blocked with no viable alternative route. The closure exposed a structural vulnerability that had been present for decades but never fully tested: the global economy had built itself around the assumption that the Strait of Hormuz would always be open.

THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ: THREATS OF CLOSURE AND GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES

Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply and a major share of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports pass through the strait every day, including exports from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. At its narrowest point, the strait is only around 33 kilometres wide, making global energy supplies highly vulnerable to disruption.

Because of its strategic importance, the Strait of Hormuz has long been central to tensions between Iran, the United States, and Gulf Arab states. Iranian leaders have repeatedly threatened to close or disrupt the strait during periods of military confrontation or sanctions pressure, arguing that if Iran cannot export its own oil, other regional states should not be allowed to do so either. The IRGC Navy developed a strategy based on asymmetric warfare, including naval mines, anti-ship missiles, drones, and fast attack boats designed to harass or disrupt shipping traffic.

Threats of Closure and Military Escalation

Serious fears of closure intensified during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, particularly during the “Tanker War,” when oil tankers and commercial vessels were attacked in the Gulf. Similar tensions re-emerged after US sanctions on Iran intensified in 2018 following Washington’s withdrawal from the JCPOA nuclear deal. Iranian officials repeatedly warned that continued economic pressure could lead to disruptions in Gulf shipments.

During periods of heightened confrontation , including the 2019 tanker attacks, the killing of General Qasem Soleimani in 2020, and the Iran-Israel-US escalation of 2025–2026 , global markets feared Iran might attempt to block the strait either fully or partially. Analysts warned that even a temporary disruption could sharply increase global oil prices, damage international trade, and potentially trigger wider military conflict involving the United States Navy and regional allies stationed in the Gulf.

Although Iran has never fully closed the Strait of Hormuz, repeated threats have demonstrated Tehran’s ability to use geography as a strategic weapon. The strait remains one of the most militarised waterways in the world and continues to symbolise the fragile balance between global energy security and regional conflict.

PEACE PROCESS AND MUTUAL HISTORY

The mutual history between Iran, Israel, and the wider Middle East has been shaped by revolutions, wars, and repeated peace efforts. Before 1979, Iran and Israel had normal relations under the Shah of Iran, who was closely allied with Western countries.

However, after the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini established the Islamic Republic and adopted a strongly anti-Israel stance, completely changing relations between the two countries. At the same time, major peace efforts were taking place in the Middle East. In 1979, Egypt and Israel signed a historic peace treaty with support from the United States, which was seen as an important step toward regional stability.

During the Reagan administration, the United States focused on promoting:

- peace negotiations,
- regional stability,
- and Israel's security.
-

However, tensions continued because of:

- proxy conflicts,
- regional rivalries,
- and growing mistrust after the Iranian Revolution.

The United Nations has repeatedly called for:

- diplomacy,
- ceasefires,
- and peaceful negotiations through the Middle East Peace Process.

In recent years, the UN has warned that increasing tensions between Iran and Israel could destabilise the entire region and has urged all sides to return to dialogue instead of military escalation.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR ISSUE

Origins: The Shah's Programme

Iran's nuclear ambitions long predate the Islamic Republic. The Shah initiated Iran's first nuclear programme in the 1950s under the US "Atoms for Peace" programme and built the Tehran Research Reactor with American assistance. He was pursuing civil nuclear power — but also keeping options open. The Islamic Republic initially halted the programme after 1979, viewing it as a Western-influenced distraction. However, during the Iran-Iraq War, when thousands of Iranian conscripts were slaughtered by Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons, the Islamist regime reconsidered, viewing nuclear deterrence as essential to national survival. Iran resumed work secretly.

The 2002 Revelation

In August 2002, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), an Iranian opposition group in exile, held a press conference in Washington, revealing the existence of two secret nuclear sites: a uranium enrichment facility at Natanz and a heavy water production plant at Arak. Satellite imagery soon confirmed both. "That was a violation of the terms of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which Iran had signed, requiring countries to disclose their nuclear-related facilities to international inspectors." In September 2009, US President Obama revealed yet another concealed facility: the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, buried deep inside a mountain near Qom, specifically to protect it from aerial attack. Obama noted its configuration was "inconsistent" with a peaceful nuclear programme.

Stuxnet: The World's First Digital Weapon Starting around 2005,

US and Israeli intelligence jointly developed Stuxnet , a sophisticated computer worm specifically designed to destroy Iran's uranium enrichment centrifuges. In 2010, Stuxnet infected the Natanz underground enrichment site and destroyed approximately 1,000 centrifuges by causing them to spin out of control while reporting normal conditions to operators. It was the world's first acknowledged use of a cyberweapon to cause physical industrial sabotage , and it set a precedent for state-sponsored digital warfare. Iran's response was to accelerate: by the early 2020s, Iran had abandoned the JCPOA's constraints entirely and was enriching uranium to 60% purity, with 440 kg enriched to that level , close to weapons grade.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Oil Markets and Energy Prices

The immediate economic consequence of Operation True Promise was a sharp surge in global energy markets. Within 24 hours of the attack, Brent crude oil prices rose approximately 3.5 percent, briefly crossing \$92 per barrel, the highest level in months. The primary driver was not actual supply disruption but fear of escalation in a region responsible for nearly a third of global oil production. Markets priced in the possibility that Israeli retaliation could trigger a broader regional conflict involving Iran, potentially threatening the Strait of Hormuz through which approximately 20 percent of global oil trade passes daily. The prospect of that waterway being threatened was sufficient to move energy prices globally without a single barrel of oil being lost. Saudi Arabia and Gulf state producers monitored the situation closely, as any escalation threatening Iranian or Gulf infrastructure would have immediately affected their own export capacity and revenues.

Financial Markets and Investor Sentiment

Global financial markets responded with immediate risk-off movements. The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange dropped sharply when trading opened following the attack, with the benchmark TA-35 index falling over 2.5 percent. The Israeli shekel weakened against the US dollar, reflecting investor concern about prolonged conflict and its impact on Israel's technology-driven export economy. Safe-haven assets responded predictably, gold prices rose above \$2,400 per ounce for the first time in history in the days surrounding the attack, driven by investor flight from risk assets toward stores of value. US Treasury bonds similarly saw increased demand. The VIX volatility index, commonly referred to as Wall Street's fear gauge, rose as uncertainty over regional escalation permeated global markets.

Insurance and Shipping.

War risk insurance premiums for vessels operating in the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf increased significantly following the attack. Lloyd's of London and major marine insurance underwriters expanded their designated high-risk zones to include broader areas of the Middle East, raising the cost of maritime trade throughout the region. Shipping companies operating routes through the Red Sea, already under pressure from Houthi attacks since late 2023, faced compounding insurance costs that were passed directly to importers and exporters. Container shipping rates on routes connecting Asia to Europe via the Middle East had already risen over 300 percent since the Red Sea disruptions began, and Operation True Promise added further uncertainty to an already stressed maritime trade environment.

Impact on the Israeli Economy.

Israel's economy absorbed significant direct and indirect costs. The Iron Dome and multilayered interception operation that neutralised the attack, involving hundreds of interceptor missiles, carried an estimated interception cost of between \$1 billion and \$1.35 billion for that single night of defence alone. Each Arrow 3 interceptor missile costs approximately \$3.5 million, David's Sling interceptors approximately \$1 million each, and Iron Dome interceptors approximately \$50,000 each. The scale of the barrage required deploying the most expensive components of Israel's defence architecture simultaneously. Beyond direct interception costs, Israel's defence ministry accelerated procurement orders for additional interceptor stockpiles, placing further pressure on an already strained defence budget that had expanded significantly since October 2023. Tourism, which contributes approximately 2.8 percent of Israel's GDP, experienced continued decline, with hotel occupancy rates in Tel Aviv and the south remaining well below historical averages throughout 2024.

Regional Economic Consequences

Jordan, which participated in intercepting Iranian drones over its own airspace, faced domestic economic pressure as a result of its involvement. Jordan imports the majority of its energy needs and relies heavily on regional stability for trade and tourism revenue. Its alignment with Israel during the attack, however strategically significant, carried political and economic costs domestically. Lebanon, already in a state of economic collapse, faced further deterioration as Hezbollah's parallel involvement in the attack deepened international reluctance to extend financial assistance to Beirut. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank both noted that sustained regional escalation was creating measurable headwinds for Middle Eastern economies, with foreign direct investment into the broader region declining as risk assessments worsened. Egypt, dependent on Suez Canal revenues that had already dropped over 50 percent due to Red Sea rerouting, faced compounding pressure as further regional instability threatened to extend shipping diversions around the Cape of Good Hope indefinitely.

Long-Term Economic Significance

The deeper economic significance of Operation True Promise was not what it destroyed but what it demonstrated. Iran had shown it was willing to directly attack a US-allied state from its own territory, crossing a threshold that fundamentally altered the regional risk calculus for investors, insurers, energy markets, and multinational corporations operating across the Middle East. The attack accelerated what analysts described as a structural repricing of Middle Eastern risk — a permanent upward adjustment in the cost of doing business, insuring assets, and financing trade across a region that had previously been considered dangerous but manageable. That repricing contributed directly to the economic environment in which subsequent escalations, including the Twelve Day War of June 2025 and Operation Epic Fury in February 2026, produced even more severe market disruptions, ultimately culminating in the Strait of Hormuz closure and the most significant global energy shock of the twenty-first century.

OPERATION EPIC FURY — 28 FEBRUARY 2026

Operation Epic Fury was the codename given to a large-scale joint American-Israeli military campaign launched against Iran on 28 February 2026. The operation marked the most direct and extensive military confrontation between the United States and Iran in modern history.

According to statements released by the White House and CENTCOM, the operation aimed to destroy Iran's ballistic missile infrastructure, weaken the IRGC, target naval assets in the Persian Gulf, and severely damage Iran's nuclear programme. The strikes began before dawn and targeted missile launch facilities, air defence systems, IRGC command centres, military airfields, and nuclear-related infrastructure across multiple Iranian provinces, including Tehran, Isfahan, Natanz, and Bandar Abbas. American B-2 bombers, cruise missiles, stealth aircraft, drones, and Israeli fighter jets participated in the assault.

Israeli operations were simultaneously referred to as "Operation Roaring Lion." President Donald Trump described the campaign as an effort to ensure Iran could "never obtain a nuclear weapon," while also attempting to cripple Iran's ability to project power through proxy groups across the Middle East. Reports from CSIS later noted that the campaign had been prepared for years through detailed target planning and suppression-of-air-defence strategies.

IRAN'S IMMEDIATE RETALIATION

Iran responded within hours with one of the largest retaliatory missile and drone attacks ever launched in the region. The IRGC fired ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones toward Israeli territory as well as American military bases across the Gulf.

Targets reportedly included bases in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and parts of Iraq hosting US personnel. Iranian state media described the retaliation as a “legitimate response to foreign aggression,” while senior IRGC commanders declared that the Islamic Republic would not allow attacks on its territory to go unanswered.

Air defence systems across the Gulf were activated as missiles crossed regional airspace, and several countries temporarily shut down civilian aviation routes. American and Israeli defence systems intercepted the majority of incoming projectiles, though some missiles reportedly caused limited damage near military installations. CENTCOM stated there were no major combat casualties during the initial retaliation despite “hundreds of Iranian missile and drone attacks.”

THE AIR AND CYBER CAMPAIGN

As the conflict expanded, Operation Epic Fury evolved beyond a single wave of strikes into a sustained air and cyber campaign. American and Israeli forces continued targeting Iranian radar systems, missile storage sites, naval facilities, drone factories, and underground infrastructure connected to uranium enrichment and weapons development. Cyber operations were also believed to play a major role.

Analysts suggested that digital attacks disrupted Iranian communication systems, radar coordination, and military command networks during the opening phase of the operation. The campaign reflected the growing integration of cyberwarfare into modern military conflict, similar to earlier operations such as Stuxnet. The Persian Gulf became heavily militarised during this period. The US Navy deployed one of the largest concentrations of American military firepower seen in the region in decades, while Iran threatened to disrupt shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz if attacks continued.

REGIONAL ESCALATION AND PROXY WARFARE

The conflict rapidly spread beyond Iran itself. Iranian-aligned groups across the Middle East increased attacks on American and Israeli interests. Hezbollah forces in Lebanon launched rockets toward northern Israel, while Iraqi militia groups targeted US positions in Iraq and Syria. The Houthis in Yemen threatened shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Several Gulf states found themselves caught between Washington and Tehran. Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia heightened military readiness as fears grew that the war could destabilise the entire region. Oil prices surged globally amid concerns that prolonged fighting could threaten energy supplies passing through the Persian Gulf. Meanwhile, Iran framed the war as evidence that the United States and Israel were attempting to destroy the Islamic Republic entirely rather than simply limit its nuclear programme. Iranian media repeatedly compared the conflict to the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, portraying national resistance as a patriotic and religious duty.

THE AIR AND CYBER CAMPAIGN

As the conflict expanded, Operation Epic Fury evolved beyond a single wave of strikes into a sustained air and cyber campaign. American and Israeli forces continued targeting Iranian radar systems, missile storage sites, naval facilities, drone factories, and underground infrastructure connected to uranium enrichment and weapons development. Cyber operations were also believed to play a major role.

Analysts suggested that digital attacks disrupted Iranian communication systems, radar coordination, and military command networks during the opening phase of the operation. The campaign reflected the growing integration of cyberwarfare into modern military conflict, similar to earlier operations such as Stuxnet. The Persian Gulf became heavily militarised during this period. The US Navy deployed one of the largest concentrations of American military firepower seen in the region in decades, while Iran threatened to disrupt shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz if attacks continued.

STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES AND AFTERMATH

Although Operation Epic Fury inflicted heavy damage on Iranian military infrastructure, intelligence assessments later suggested that Iran retained parts of its missile capability and underground facilities. Reports indicated that some enriched uranium stockpiles may have been moved before key strikes occurred. Iranian leadership declared political victory despite the destruction, arguing that the country had survived a coordinated assault by two major military powers while still maintaining retaliatory capability. The conflict also reinforced Iran's long-standing military doctrine: avoiding prolonged conventional warfare while relying heavily on missiles, drones, cyberwarfare, and regional proxy networks. The operation significantly increased tensions across West Asia and deepened fears of a broader regional war. It also accelerated debates about Iran's nuclear future, with many analysts warning that the conflict could push Tehran closer toward openly pursuing nuclear weapons capability as a deterrent against future attacks. Even after temporary ceasefires and diplomatic efforts reduced direct fighting, Operation Epic Fury fundamentally changed the strategic relationship between Iran, Israel, and the United States. The conflict marked the clearest transition from indirect shadow warfare to open state-on-state military confrontation.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN IRAN

1. Thousands killed, tens of thousands injured across Iran and Lebanon.
2. Over 1.65 million people displaced (Iran: 1.2M+; Lebanon: 300K+).
3. 307 health and medical facilities damaged as of April 3, 2026 (Iranian Red Crescent).
4. Strikes on the Natanz Nuclear Facility; hospitals struck in collateral damage
5. Iran's healthcare system was already overwhelmed from the January massacre crackdown.
6. Iranian strikes on desalination plants in Kuwait and Qatar threatened drinking water for populations relying on them for 99% of water supply.

RELEVANT LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

1. Fourth Geneva Convention: Prohibits collective punishment of civilians during armed conflict
2. Protocol I: Prohibits attacks on civilian objects, including infrastructure essential to civilian survival
3. UN Charter Articles 2(4) and 51: Use of force and self-defense (contested basis for US strikes)
4. Rome Statute / ICC: War crimes jurisdiction over willful targeting of civilians
IHL Principle of Proportionality: Military advantage must be proportionate to civilian harm
5. Nuclear sites under attack: Risk of radiological contamination crossing borders – legal and environmental liability

THE SUCCESSION OF THE SUPREME LEADER: IRAN AFTER AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI

The Supreme Leader is the highest political and religious authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Under the doctrine of Velayat-e-Faqih (“Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist”), created by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini after the 1979 Revolution, the Supreme Leader holds ultimate control over the military, judiciary, state broadcasting, foreign policy, and major strategic decisions. The position stands above the elected president and parliament. After Khomeini died in 1989, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei became Supreme Leader and has ruled Iran ever since. Over more than three decades, Khamenei consolidated power through the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), the judiciary, religious foundations, and conservative clerical networks. As he aged and concerns over his health increased, the question of succession became one of the most important political issues inside Iran.

The Succession Process and Main Contenders

According to Iran’s constitution, the next Supreme Leader is officially chosen by the Assembly of Experts, an 88-member clerical body elected by the public but heavily vetted by the Guardian Council. In reality, however, analysts widely believe that the IRGC, senior clerics, and political elites would play the decisive role in selecting Khamenei’s successor. Several figures were repeatedly discussed as possible successors. President Ebrahim Raisi was once considered a leading candidate because of his close ties to Khamenei and conservative institutions, but his death in a helicopter crash in May 2024 dramatically changed succession calculations. Mojtaba Khamenei, the Supreme Leader’s son, also emerged as a significant figure due to his influence within the IRGC and clerical networks, though critics argued that hereditary succession would contradict the revolutionary principles of the Islamic Republic. Other names occasionally mentioned included former judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani and various senior clerics in Qom.

The succession issue became even more sensitive during the protests of 2022–2026 and growing economic instability. Many analysts warned that a leadership transition during a period of unrest could create divisions within the regime, especially between hardline clerics, reformist factions, and the IRGC.

Strategic Importance and Future Implications

The succession of the Supreme Leader is considered one of the most critical turning points for the future of Iran. The next leader will shape Iran's nuclear policy, relations with the West, treatment of domestic opposition, and support for regional proxy groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis. Some observers believe the IRGC could gain even greater influence after Khamenei, potentially transforming Iran into a more openly military-dominated state. Others argue that internal pressures, including economic collapse, youth dissatisfaction, and repeated protest movements, may force the leadership to consider limited reforms to preserve stability. Regardless of who succeeds Khamenei, the transition is expected to determine whether Iran continues its current revolutionary path or enters a new political era. Because the Supreme Leader controls both ideological legitimacy and state power, succession remains one of the most closely watched and politically sensitive issues in the Middle East.

IMPORTANT RESOLUTIONS AND DOCUMENTS

A. Treaties and Agreements

1. Algiers Agreement (1975) — Iran-Iraq border and Shatt al-Arab waterway deal
2. Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (1979) — First Arab-Israeli peace deal, US-brokered
3. JCPOA — Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015) — Iran nuclear deal with P5+1
4. UNCLOS — UN Convention on the Law of the Sea — Governs Strait of Hormuz transit rights
5. Atoms for Peace Agreement (1950s) — US-Iran nuclear cooperation under the Shah
6. Anglo-Iranian Oil Company Concession (1933) — British control of Iranian oil
7. Petrodollar Agreement — US-Saudi Arabia (1974) — Oil traded exclusively in USD

B. UNSC Resolutions

1. Resolution 598 (1987) — Iran-Iraq War ceasefire
2. Resolution 660 (1990) — Condemned the Kuwait invasion
3. Resolution 661 (1990) — Sanctions on Iraq
4. Resolution 678 (1990) — Authorised use of force to liberate Kuwait
5. Resolution 687 (1991) — Gulf War ceasefire terms imposed on Iraq
6. Resolution 1737 (2006) — First UN sanctions on Iran over nuclear programme
7. Resolution 1929 (2010) — Strongest UN sanctions on Iran pre-JCPOA
8. Resolution 2187 (2026)

CLOSING STATEMENT AND FREEZE DATE:

President Donald Trump has issued a direct ultimatum to Iran, warning that if the Strait of Hormuz is not reopened and tensions are not reduced, the United States is prepared to respond with overwhelming force. Across the Middle East, fear and uncertainty continue to grow. Oil prices are unstable, military fleets remain on high alert, and millions wait anxiously to see what the next few hours will bring. One decision could prevent catastrophe, or trigger a conflict far greater than anyone can control. Diplomacy is running out of time. Now, as the clock ticks closer to the deadline, it is up to this committee to decide the fate of the world.

The freeze date for this committee is the night of April 7th, right after President Donald Trump's "a whole civilization will die tonight" statement, one of the most extreme rhetorical escalations by a sitting US president in modern history. We stand on the precipice of what can turn into a disaster of global proportions. It is now up to the delegates to use their skills of diplomacy and wit to guide our committee to the same ceasefire the world reached the next day, or something much darker.

NOTE: The following events occurred after the freeze date and therefore do not exist in the committee's timeline. Delegates cannot reference or rely on them in debate or resolutions:

1. The April 7–8 ceasefire between the US and Iran (that evening, after the committee freezes)
2. The US naval blockade of Iranian ports (imposed April 13)
3. The Islamabad peace talks and their collapse (April 11–13)
4. Trump's "Operation Project Freedom" naval escort mission (May 4)
5. Any events after April 7, 2026

We look forward to seeing you in committee!
Committee email: ungaess.thsmun@gmail.com

SOURCES AND IMPORTANT CITATIONS

1. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/5/a-timeline-of-protests-in-iran-after-the-1979-islamic-revolution>

2. <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2022/9/23/iran-morality-police-root-cause-iranian-protest-anger-explainer>

3. [aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/24/iran-iraq-tanker-war-redux-why-the-strait-of-hormuz-crisis-is-different](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/4/24/iran-iraq-tanker-war-redux-why-the-strait-of-hormuz-crisis-is-different)

4. <https://dppa.dfs.un.org/en/middle-east-peace-process>

5. <https://dppa.dfs.un.org/en/middle-east-peace-process>

6. White House — Operation Epic Fury: Decisive American Power to Crush Iran's Terror Regime

7. CSIS — Opefence — How Cyber Was Used During Operation Epic Fury

8. GlobalSecurity — Operation Epic Fury Air Campaign

9. Jerusalem Post — Iran News Coverage