

## IRAN IS NOT THE AGGRESSOR: HISTORY OF PROVOCATION BY THE UNITED STATES.

*A legal indictment providnd that the United States, not Iran has ben the consistent aggressor in their bilateral history – initiating conflict, undermining sovereignty, and violating international law at every critical juncture.*

### I. The 1953 Coup Against Prime Minister Mossadegh

#### A. Regime Change Without Justification

The United States' long history of provocation against the Islamic Republic did not begin with nuclear disputes or missile launches. It began with oil. In 1953, the CIA, acting under the authorization of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and in collaboration with British intelligence (MI6), orchestrated a covert operation to overthrow Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. This was not a response to aggression. It was not a preemption of violence. It was a coup for commerce – an illegal decapitation of a sovereign government to protect Western access to petroleum profits.

The operation, codenamed **TPAJAX**, was executed through bribery, misinformation, mob violence, and direct sabotage of Iran's internal political process. Mossadegh's only "crime" was asserting Iranian control over its own oil resources by nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), a corporation which had plundered Iranian crude under colonial-era concessions. For this, he was branded a threat, destabilized, and ultimately removed by foreign agents.

There was no legal basis for intervention. There was no act of war by Iran. The United States, in direct defiance of international law, chose to nullify Iran's democratic will to preserve British economic interests.

#### B. Legal Violations and Doctrinal Collapse

The overthrow of Mossadegh constituted a **clear and categorical violation** of the UN Charter – specifically Article 2(4), which prohibits "the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." Covert regime change is no less a violation than military invasion; sovereignty is not nullified by secrecy.

Moreover, TPAJAX violated the principle of **non-intervention** in domestic affairs, long established in customary international law and affirmed in multiple UN General Assembly resolutions, including Resolution 2131 (1965), which declared such interference "inadmissible."

The coup also trampled the **right to self-determination**, which by 1953 had become a recognized legal norm, even if inconsistently enforced. Mossadegh was not a dictator. He was appointed by the Shah, confirmed by the Majlis, and immensely popular with the Iranian people. He was overthrown not to save democracy – but to destroy it.

The CIA's own internal history, declassified decades later, explicitly admitted to orchestrating the events leading to the coup. These admissions are not speculative. They are confessed crimes. The intervention was not defensive – it was **commercial sabotage through political violence**.

## C. The Birth of Anti-Americanism and the Rise of Autocracy

The consequences of the 1953 coup were seismic and enduring. The Shah – Mohammad Reza Pahlavi – was restored to absolute monarchical power and reigned for 26 years with brutal American support. His regime operated a secret police force, SAVAK, notorious for torture, disappearances, and repression. The United States funded, armed, and praised this dictatorship, propping it up with billions in aid and arms sales while whitewashing its human rights abuses.

Iranian resentment was not irrational. It was earned. The anti-American sentiment that would later culminate in the 1979 Revolution was not religious extremism. It was political memory – a population that remembered what the United States had done to its democracy, and who it had installed in its place.

Thus, the foundational myth of Iranian aggression begins with a fact the West rarely mentions: **Iran did not attack the United States. The United States attacked Iran.** Not with tanks, but with dollars. Not with bombs, but with bribes. And not to prevent war – but to secure oil.

## D. Precedent for Lawless Intervention

TPAJAX set a precedent that would become U.S. standard operating procedure for the next seventy years: overthrow inconvenient governments under the banner of “stability.” It foreshadowed Guatemala (1954), Chile (1973), and countless other covert regime change operations cloaked in the language of liberty but executed in the service of capital.

The 1953 coup remains the **original sin** of U.S.–Iran relations. Every subsequent conflict – the hostage crisis, the nuclear dispute, the proxy wars – can be traced back to the decision that Washington made to trample Iranian sovereignty for profit. The regime that replaced Mossadeqh was not democratic.

1. [\*CIA Declassified Document \(2000\): The Battle for Iran \(internal history of the coup by Donald Willber\)\*](#)
2. [\*UN Charter Article 2\(4\)\*](#)
3. *Statements from / about Kermit Roosevelt (CIA operative):*
  - [\*“I owe my throne to God, my people, my army – and to you!” - Shah of Iran to Kermit Roosevelt \(August 1953\)\*](#)
  - [\*“The CIA team, led by Kermit Roosevelt, improvised... using their Iranian agents to publicize the Shah’s opposition to Mossadeq and create fear ... The demonstrations ... were only ‘partially spontaneous’ and were led and incited to violence by the CIA’s Iranian agents.” - Declassified CIA Records\*](#)
  - [\*“Another recent development ... our agent there ... worked intelligently, courageously and tirelessly. ... When we realize ... Mossadeqh seemed to be more firmly entrenched ... then we can understand exactly how courageous our agent was in staying right on the job and ... reversed the entire situation.” - President Eisenhower praising Roosevelt\*](#)

## II. U.S. Support for Saddam Hussein During the Iran–Iraq War

### A. Washington’s Chosen Butcher

In 1980, Saddam Hussein launched a full-scale invasion of Iran – a war of aggression under any conceivable interpretation of international law. The pretext was flimsy: border disputes, sectarian

posturing, and Saddam's delusional ambition to replace Iran as the dominant power in the Persian Gulf. But the timing was opportunistic: Iran was in revolutionary upheaval, its military weakened, and its regime internationally isolated. Saddam saw vulnerability. The United States saw opportunity.

Rather than condemn the invasion, Washington chose to bankroll it.

The Reagan administration, under the guise of "regional stability," funneled diplomatic cover, military intelligence, logistical support, and indirect arms to a dictator who was committing what would later be defined as **war crimes and crimes against humanity**.

The Iran–Iraq War lasted eight brutal years. It was one of the deadliest conflicts of the 20th century. And at every critical juncture, the United States did not act as a neutral observer. It acted as **Saddam Hussein's strategic partner**.

## **B. Material Support for Aggression and Chemical Warfare**

U.S. support for Iraq during the war was not passive. It was systematic and material:

- Satellite intelligence was provided to aid Iraqi targeting of Iranian positions – including during known chemical weapons attacks.
- U.S. officials removed Iraq from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1982, in order to legalize the sale of dual-use technology.
- Billions in agricultural credits and technology exports were funneled to Baghdad through third-party laundering systems.
- Biological precursors, helicopters, and key components for weapons production were exported – often through Department of Commerce-approved deals.
- Washington blocked UN Security Council resolutions condemning Iraq's use of chemical weapons, despite irrefutable evidence.

The result: Saddam gassed Iranian soldiers with impunity. He launched mustard gas and nerve agents against civilians. He violated the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the Chemical Weapons Convention (which Iraq was not party to, but the acts were nonetheless war crimes), and all norms of humanitarian law.

And the United States helped him do it.

## **C. Legal and Moral Complicity**

By any standard of international law, this qualifies as **aiding and abetting violations of the laws of war**.

Under Article 16 of the International Law Commission's Draft Articles on State Responsibility, a state is responsible for aiding another in the commission of an internationally wrongful act if:

- "(a) that State does so with knowledge of the circumstances of the internationally wrongful act; and*
- (b) the act would be internationally wrongful if committed by that State."*

Here, both criteria are unambiguously met. The U.S. government was fully aware of Iraq's chemical weapons use as early as 1983. Internal State Department cables acknowledged the use of mustard gas and tabun. Yet support continued – because the goal was not legality. The goal was to “contain” Iran, even if that meant violating every foundational principle of the post–World War II order.

This was not neutrality. It was co-belligerency by proxy.

#### **D. The Myth of Iranian Intransigence**

The official U.S. narrative has long painted Iran as the irrational aggressor in the region – a dangerous theocracy unwilling to negotiate, compromise, or coexist. Yet in the 1980s, the record shows the opposite.

Iran did not invade Iraq. It was invaded.

Iran did not gas civilians. It was gassed.

Iran repeatedly called for international condemnation of Saddam's war crimes – and the U.S. vetoed or stonewalled every such effort.

Even after the war, the United States refused to hold Iraq accountable. Only after Saddam invaded Kuwait – threatening oil flows to U.S.-aligned monarchies – did Washington suddenly discover his “brutality.”

The selective morality is staggering. A dictator who massacres Iranians is an asset. A dictator who threatens oil is a villain.

This is not principled foreign policy. It is **transactional atrocity management**.

#### **E. Legacy**

The Iran–Iraq War did not end with peace. It ended with trauma. Iran buried hundreds of thousands of soldiers, many of them victims of chemical warfare that the West refused to denounce. And from that trauma, Iran learned a simple lesson: international law cannot be relied on when your enemies are backed by superpowers.

If the world will not enforce the rules, you must enforce them yourself.

It is no coincidence that Iran's interest in asymmetric deterrence – including its pursuit of missile programs and nuclear hedging strategies – escalated after 1988. It was not driven by ideology. It was driven by history. The United States taught Iran that rules are optional – and then blamed it for not trusting the rulebook.

1. [\*Declassified U.S. Diplomatic Cables Confirming Knowledge of Chemical Attacks\*](#) - NSA
  - [\*Document 24: CIA reports confirming Iraqi chemical attacks\*](#)
  - [\*Document 25: State Department confirming Iraq's use of chemical weapons in 1983 but chose to suppress the information and privately urge restraint to avoid aiding Iran's public narrative.\*](#)
2. [\*U.S. Blocking of UN Condemnation Resolutions\*](#)
3. [\*International Law Commission, Article 16\*](#)

### III. Nuclear Hypocrisy and Sanctions as Siege Warfare

#### A. The Double Standard That Defines U.S. Non-Proliferation Policy

To understand the nuclear crisis between the United States and Iran, one must first discard the myth that Iran is a rogue actor violating sacred international norms. The truth is far less moralistic and far more strategic: **Iran is punished not for defying nuclear law – but for defying American hegemony.**

At no point in its modern history has Iran ever detonated a nuclear weapon.

At no point has Iran withdrawn from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

At no point has the IAEA accused Iran of diverting fissile material to an active weapons program after 2003.

And yet, Iran is subject to some of the harshest nuclear-related sanctions ever imposed on a sovereign state. Meanwhile, **Israel – a nuclear-armed state that has never signed the NPT – receives over \$3 billion a year in U.S. aid.** Pakistan and India, both nuclear states developed outside the NPT framework, have faced no comparable isolation. The lesson is unmistakable: **The NPT is not a treaty. It is a tool.**

When America breaks the rules, they are reinterpreted. When Iran complies with the rules, the rules are changed.

#### B. JCPOA: A Binding Accord Unilaterally Violated by the United States

In 2015, Iran entered into the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a multilateral agreement signed alongside the U.S., U.K., Russia, China, France, Germany, and ratified by the UN Security Council (Resolution 2231). It imposed the most intrusive inspections regime ever negotiated, including:

- A cap on enrichment to 3.67%
- Stockpile limits of 300kg of low-enriched uranium
- A 98% reduction in centrifuges
- Full IAEA access to declared and suspect sites

Iran complied. Every quarterly IAEA report from 2015 to 2018 confirmed this. **There was no breach, no deception, no illicit bomb-building.**

But in 2018, then-President Donald Trump **unilaterally withdrew** from the agreement – not because Iran violated it, but because he could. The Trump administration reimposed secondary sanctions on every major sector of Iran's economy and pressured foreign firms to pull out. This was not diplomacy. This was economic siege warfare in breach of a binding international commitment.

The U.S. did not just abandon the JCPOA. It violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231 – the legal basis of the deal. It punished Iran for following rules that America itself authored. And then it called Iran the cheat.

This is the inverse of law. It is the jurisprudence of empire.

### C. Sanctions as Collective Punishment

Western discourse treats sanctions as a diplomatic tool. In reality, they function as **non-kinetic warfare** – a blockade in everything but name. U.S. sanctions on Iran restrict access to:

- International banking (via SWIFT restrictions)
- Essential medical imports
- Industrial parts and basic infrastructure materials
- Food trade, including critical staples like wheat and rice

The effect is not theoretical. It is measurable in lives. Reports from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and even the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights confirm what U.S. officials know but will not say publicly: **sanctions kill**. Children with leukemia cannot access chemotherapy. Hospitals operate without adequate anesthesia. Insulin becomes a black-market item. This is not targeted pressure on elites. This is civilian strangulation – **a siege against 85 million people**.

Under the Geneva Conventions, collective punishment is a war crime. Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, deliberately inflicting conditions of life designed to destroy a population – even slowly – constitutes a crime against humanity. Iran has not attacked the U.S. with nuclear weapons. The U.S. has attacked Iran with economic weapons – and does so daily.

### D. The Myth of the “Nuclear Threat”

Despite decades of U.S. rhetoric about “stopping Iran from getting the bomb,” no concrete evidence has emerged of a decision by Tehran to pursue nuclear weapons post-2003. In fact:

- U.S. National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) from 2007 onward affirm that Iran **halted** its military nuclear program over 15 years ago.
- Iran has repeatedly issued **religious edicts (fatwas)** by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declaring nuclear weapons forbidden.
- The IAEA has conducted **more inspections in Iran** than in any other non-nuclear weapons state.

If Iran were pursuing a bomb, it would have done so already. It has the technical capacity. What it lacks is the intention – or more precisely, the strategic calculus. Iran is not irrational. It is surrounded by nuclear-armed states – Israel to the west, Pakistan to the east, Russia to the north, and U.S. warships in the Gulf. If any nation had a deterrent case, it is Iran.

But restraint has brought no relief. It has brought escalation. The more Iran complies, the more Washington demands. This is not nonproliferation.

### E. Legal Framing: U.S. Breaches of Treaty and International Obligation

Under Article VI of the NPT, all nuclear-armed states are required to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race.” Instead, the U.S. has:

- Modernized its own nuclear arsenal
- Withdrawn from arms control treaties (INF, Open Skies)
- Refused to recognize the nuclear disarmament commitments of Resolution 2231

More damningly, by violating the JCPOA – and then threatening others for abiding by it – the U.S. violated the **Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties**, which holds that states must not “defeat the object and purpose” of a treaty once signed, even if not ratified.

No international court has enforced this, of course. But the legal record is clear: **Iran kept the deal. America broke it.**

1. [\*IAEA JCPOA Compliance Reports \(2015-2018\)\*](#)
2. [\*UN Security Council Resolution 2231 \(2015\)\*](#)
3. [\*Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties \(Article 18\)\*](#)

#### **IV. The Assassination of Qassem Soleimani**

##### **A. Targeted Murder on Foreign Soil**

On January 3, 2020, the United States executed a drone strike near Baghdad International Airport, killing Major General Qassem Soleimani – a senior Iranian military commander, head of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and a sitting state official. Also killed were Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and at least eight others.

The strike was not carried out in the context of open warfare. Congress had not declared war on Iran. Iran had not attacked U.S. soil. There was no battlefield. There was no combat. There was only a sovereign Iranian official, traveling to a third country under diplomatic auspices, struck down by an American missile on foreign soil.

This was not a military operation. **It was an extrajudicial assassination.**  
And it was an unambiguous violation of international law.

##### **B. Violation of Iraqi Sovereignty and the UN Charter**

The United States carried out the killing **on Iraqi territory** without Baghdad’s approval or prior knowledge. Iraq – a U.S. ally – had not consented to host a targeted assassination. In fact, Soleimani was reportedly in Baghdad at the invitation of Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi to discuss regional de-escalation on behalf of the Iranian government.

This makes the strike a double offense:

- **Against Iraq:** a sovereign state whose territorial integrity was breached.

- **Against Iran:** whose senior official was murdered without due process, on diplomatic assignment, outside of any active hostilities.

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter forbids “the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.” The U.S. violated this clause **twice over**.

The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, **Agnes Callamard**, concluded the act was “unlawful” and that the U.S. had failed to provide credible justification under international law. Her findings were not symbolic. They were legally grounded.

### **C. The Myth of “Imminence” and the Fabrication of Just Cause**

The Trump administration justified the strike by claiming that Soleimani was plotting “imminent” attacks against U.S. personnel. But no credible evidence has ever been produced to support this claim. No threat was presented to the United Nations. No classified evidence was shared with Congressional oversight committees that could corroborate it. U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper later admitted that he had seen **no specific intelligence** indicating a concrete plot.

The legal threshold for preemptive self-defense under **Article 51 of the UN Charter** is high:

*“Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs...”*

This clause is clear: self-defense may only be invoked **after** an armed attack, or – in tightly defined doctrine – in response to an imminent threat with no other means of prevention.

Soleimani was not attacking.

There was no ticking bomb.

The U.S. did not strike in defense – it struck in opportunity.

That makes the killing illegal.

### **D. Unlawful Assassination of a State Official**

Soleimani was not a stateless militant or terrorist ringleader. He was a **uniformed officer of a sovereign nation-state**. His actions, whether controversial or hostile, were not extralegal. They were official state functions, carried out under the chain of command of a UN-member government.

Assassinating a state official under such circumstances is **expressly prohibited** under U.S. Executive Order 12333, which bans targeted killings outside declared war zones. It also violates **customary international law**, which reserves the use of lethal force for wartime combatants – not peacetime political opponents.



No nation has the right to unilaterally designate foreign officials for death, especially outside the context of active hostilities. To normalize this is to invite a world where diplomacy is replaced by drones, and policy by assassination.

If Russia killed a U.S. general visiting London, citing “preemptive defense,” the world would call it what it is: an act of war. When the U.S. does it, it is branded “decisive leadership.”

This is not law. This is **hegemonic exceptionalism**.

### **E. Destruction of Global Precedent**

The assassination of Soleimani shattered whatever fragile norms remained around the use of lethal force in international affairs. The U.S. has now claimed – and exercised – the right to:

- Kill foreign officials with whom it is not at war
- In countries where it is not at war
- Without presenting public evidence
- Without Security Council authorization
- Without Congressional declaration
- Without judicial review
- And without regard to the domestic laws of the targeted state, the host state, or international treaties

This is not self-defense.

It sets a precedent that will inevitably be followed. If China kills a Taiwanese leader abroad, citing “unlawful separatism,” the U.S. will have no legal ground to object. If Iran kills an Israeli general in a third country, citing “imminent crimes,” Tel Aviv will find no protection in law – because law has been gutted.

The Soleimani strike was not just an attack on one man. It was an attack on the rule of law itself. A warning shot – not to Iran, but to the world – that the U.S. will kill when it wants, where it wants, with impunity.

### **F. Consequences**

Following the assassination, Iran launched ballistic missiles at U.S. bases in Iraq – the first time Tehran had directly targeted U.S. forces in a state-to-state military operation. Over 100 U.S. personnel were injured. The region spiraled toward the brink of full-scale war.

But even beyond the immediate fallout, the long-term impact is strategic: the rules no longer apply. Diplomats are now legitimate targets. Military officials are hunted assets. **The distinction between combatant and emissary is dead.**

And it was the United States – not Iran – that killed it.

1. [UN Report by Agnes Callamard \(2020\)](#)
2. [Mark Esper Interview](#)
3. [UN Charter Article 51](#)
4. [U.S. Executive Order 12333 \(Prohibition on Assassinations\)](#)

## V. Concluding Memorandum

The evidence presented does not describe a misunderstanding. It does not suggest mutual fault, cultural friction, or “complicated geopolitics.” What it reveals is a **systematic, deliberate pattern of provocation, aggression, and lawlessness**—carried out by the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran across generations, governments, and global orders.

Iran is not the aggressor.

Iran is the responded-to.

Iran is the outmaneuvered, the undermined, the coerced – and when necessary, the punished.

### The record is not ambiguous:

- In **1953**, Iran had a functioning constitutional democracy. It was dismantled by the CIA, not to stop war, but to secure oil.
- In the **1980s**, Iran was invaded by Saddam Hussein. The U.S. armed the invader and shielded his war crimes from global accountability.
- In the **2000s**, Iran complied with the NPT. The U.S. redefined compliance as defiance, imposed sanctions that starved civilians, and pulled out of a treaty it itself had authored – only to blame Iran for the collapse.
- In **2020**, Iran sent a senior official to a third country under diplomatic pretenses. The U.S. dropped a missile on his head, on the territory of an allied state, during peacetime, without evidence of imminent threat – and called it “self-defense.”

At each point, **the facts show a consistent one-sided escalation**—a doctrine not of law, but of impunity.

And yet the narrative persists: that Iran is the rogue, the mad dog, the destabilizer. It is a fiction. A lie. A deliberate inversion of cause and effect.

### The Legal Regime has been Destroyed

The United States has trampled nearly every legal principle it once claimed to champion:

- **Sovereignty** – nullified by coups and drone strikes.
- **Non-aggression** – discarded when inconvenient.
- **Self-determination** – criminalized if it leads to disobedience.
- **Nuclear disarmament** – enforced only on enemies, never on allies.
- **Human rights** – cited selectively, ignored structurally.

It has done so without consequence, because it operates inside a closed circuit of power: a self-policing hegemon with veto power at the Security Council, extraterritorial reach through sanctions, and a media machine that recycles justification as truth. In this world order, **the aggressor does not fire first – it rewrites the story.**

### **The Moral Inversion is Complete**

What then does “aggression” mean in the U.S. lexicon?

It means building alliances outside the dollar.

It means nationalizing your oil.

It means refusing weapons inspections the U.S. never submits to.

It means striking back when struck.

It means surviving.

Iran is vilified not for attacking America, but for refusing to submit to it. For continuing to exist outside its orbit. For attempting – however imperfectly – to chart its own course.

That is the real offense. That is the real crime.

### **Reckoning**

No state can violate the law forever without consequence. No empire outlasts its impunity. The precedent the United States has set – of coups without apology, wars without declaration, assassinations without due process, treaties without enforcement, and sanctions without mercy – **will not be forgotten.** And when the day comes that these same tools are used against it, there will be no legal high ground to retreat to. It destroyed that ground itself.

Iran is not innocent of all wrongdoing. No state is. But the framing – that it is the irrational actor, the villain of the global order – is unsustainable. Because the facts, the documents, the treaties, the resolutions, the cables, the photographs, and the corpses – **they all point in one direction.**

Let it be stated, without ambiguity:

- The United States overthrew Iran’s democracy.
- The United States armed Iran’s enemies as they gassed civilians.
- The United States broke the nuclear deal.
- The United States assassinated Iranian officials outside of war.

Iran did not provoke these actions. It endured them.

This history is not a justification for any future act. It is a **ledger of past crimes** – committed not by the supposed aggressor, but by the accuser. And as with all empires, the denial of guilt does not erase it. It simply delays the reckoning.

Let the record show:

**Iran is not the aggressor.**

The aggressor wears a star-spangled suit and calls its bombs "freedom."

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