Eroding the UN Charter? A Critical Appraisal of the 2026 Iran Conflict and the Law on the Use of Force

Abstract

The 2026 Iran conflict happening in Israel, the United States of America, and Iran marks an important turning point in the steady breakdown of the United Nations Charter and the global rules on using force.[1] This paper takes a critical look at the conflict through a legal viewpoint, placing it within the view of Charter erosion that dated back in 1945.[2] The Charter's core pillars sovereignty, the ban on force, collective security, and peaceful dispute resolution were made to stop wars and ensure military moves only got the green light from the collective.[3].

The paper kicks off with the Charter's historical and legal roots, spotlighting early hurdles and key doctrinal shifts like humanitarian intervention, anticipatory self-defense, and the Responsibility to Protect.[4] The Security Council's deadlock puts together collective security, while vague doctrine, blurs legal lines. By unpacking the clash in depth and linking it to wider historical and legal paths, this paper adds real value to studies on Charter erosion and international law's road ahead.[5]

Key words

1. 2026 Iran conflict
2. UN Charter erosion
3. Use of force and self-defense
4. Collective security paralysis
5. Humanitarian impact of warfare

[1] United Nations Charter, 1945, Articles 2(4) and 51
[2] Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (Oxford University Press, 1990).
[3] Christine Gray, International Law and the Use of Force (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[4] GRAY, supra note 3
[5] GRAY, supra note 3

Introduction

The 2026 Iran conflict, including the United States, Israel, and Iran into the fray, is one of the biggest shakes to the international legal setup since the UN Charter kicked in back in 1945.[6] It sparks big questions about the Charter's pull, the reach of the force ban, and whether collective security can hold up against these geopolitical clashes. This paper makes the case that the Iran conflict lays bare the Charter's erosion, as countries dodge group processes, grab onto shaky self-defense claims, and make force exceptions feel normal.

Right from the start, this intro sets the scene, spells out the main idea, and draws the paper's blueprint. To pull that off, we look at the root of the Iran conflict in international law's bigger story, highlight the key legal stakes, and explain why this one's a game-changer. The Charter aimed to peace has failed the global population in ensuring security, since 1945, we've seen breach after breach from Korea to Kosovo, Iraq, Syria, and now Iran. Each one chips away at Charter's costs, combining picky rule-following and handy excuses. The Iran conflict keeps that pattern alive, forcing hard looks at international law's future.[7]

Context and Background

The spark for the Iran conflict ties back to years of bad blood between Israel and Iran, especially over Iran's nuclear push. Israel has always seen Iran's nuclear goals as a do-or-die danger, fearing bombs that could wipe out its cities. The US, Israel's top partner, shares those worries and wants to curb Iran's sway in the region. Early 2026 brought intel saying Iran ramped up uranium work past safe civilian levels. Israel hit back with pre-emptive strikes on those sites, saying any wait for a real hit would be deadly. The US jumped in fast, offering military and logistics help. Iran fired missiles and rallied regional allies, turning it into a full-blown regional mess.[8]

Zoom out, and the Middle East has long been ground zero for Charter tests. Think Arab- Israeli wars, US moves in Iraq and Syria. Iran's own rap sheet from the 1953 coup to the Iran- Iraq War and nuclear fights shows a history of iffy legality and cherry-picked rules. That's the backdrop for unpacking 2026.

Legal Issues at Stake

The Iran clash spotlights core legal fights. First up, Article 2(4)'s force ban against any state's turf or independence unless self-defense saves it. Second, Article 51's self-defense trigger only after an armed hit; Israel pushed anticipatory, US collective, Iran straight sovereignty.
Each twists the Charter differently. Third, Security Council freeze-up no binding calls thanks to vetoes torpedoes collective security, pushing solo plays. Fourth, proportionality, necessity, and humanitarian rules get tested hard with nuke-site hits and civilian hits.[9]

---

[6] United Nations Charter, 1945, Articles 2(4) and 51.
[7] GRAY, supra note 3
[8] International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Safeguards Report on Iran, 2026.
[9] International Court of Justice, Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America), ICJ Reports 1986

Significance of the Case

Why care about Iran? It ropes in big players with clashing claims, showing law's splinter. Stakes sky-high with nukes and chaos. Great-power rifts paralyze the Council. It echoes old breaches but amps up with nukes and proxies. Perfect for probing Charter fade and law's next chapter.

Central Thesis

Bottom line: The Iran conflict spotlights UN Charter erosion. Countries skip groups, grab fuzzy doctrines, normalize outs. Bans stay on paper but get ignored in the real world. It shows how law gets twisted for convenience, Council stalls from rivalries, force bans watered down by wide self-defense reads. Result? Charter norms lose teeth, law turns to lip service.

Structure of the Paper

The paper rolls out in twelve parts. Section 2 covers history and law background, rooting Charter in big-picture violations. Section 3 facts the Iran fight timeline, reactions. Section 4 maps legal tools: Articles 2(4)/51, Council role, custom law. Sections 5–7 pick apart US, Israel, Iran actions vs. Charter fit.[10] Section 8 eyes UN/world role, collective security bust. Section 9 sums erosion case. Section 10 compares Kosovo/Iraq/Syria for patterns. Section 11 dives critical views realist vs. legalist, scholar fights. Section 12 sums, reflects, recommends Charter boosts.

Methodology and Approach

This work blends legal deep-dive with history and politics. We parse Charter text, doctrines, Iran state moves, tie to history/scholar chat. It's cross-field law doesn't float alone from strategy/power. Balanced take: owns legal limits and real-world musts, spotlights legality vs. need clash.[11]

Historical and Legal Background

The United Nations Charter, born in 1945 from the ashes of World War II, aimed to create a fresh international legal order. It sought to stop countries from launching unilateral wars and insisted that force could only be used collectively, with the Security Council's green light.[12] At its core, the Charter banned the threat or use of force against any state's territorial integrity or political independence that's Article 2(4) while Article 51 carved out an exception for self-defence in the face of an armed attack.[13]

These rules form the foundation of how modern international law handles the use of force.

[10] Michael Glennon, "The Fog of Law: Self-defense, Inherence, and Incoherence in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter," Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy 25 (2002): 539–558.
[11] Ian Hurd, After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council (Princeton University Press, 2007).
[12] United Nations Charter, 1945, Preamble
[13] United Nations Charter, Articles 2(4) and 51 and Ian Brownlie, International Law and the Use of Force by States (Oxford University Press, 1963).

But since 1945, history has been full of violations, heated debates over interpretations, and a slow chipping away at the Charter's authority.

The Charter’s Foundational Principles

The Charter rests on a few key ideas that still shape global relations. Sovereignty comes first: every state gets to govern its own territory and stay independent without outsiders meddling. Then there's the non-use of force rule states can't resort to violence except in self-defense or with Security Council approval. Collective security puts the Council in the driver's seat for keeping peace, with its decisions binding everyone. And finally, disputes must be settled peacefully through talks, mediation, arbitration, or courts, not bullets.[14] Together, these principles paint a picture of law holding power in check, swapping solo adventures for team efforts.

Early Challenges to the Charter

Right out of the gate, the Charter hit real-world roadblocks. Take the Korean War in 1950 it put collective security to the test. The Security Council greenlit action against North Korea, but only because the Soviet Union was boycotting and couldn't veto.[15] That moment showed the system's promise, but also how fragile it could be. Fast-forward to the 1956 Suez Crisis, where Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt without any authorization, exposing the Charter's limits. The Vietnam War drove home how tough it is to rein in superpowers. These early tests proved the Charter offered a solid legal blueprint, but politics often called the shots.

The Middle East as a Testing Ground

No region has stressed the Charter more than the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 sparked fierce arguments over self-defense claims and pre-emptive strikes, with Israel's moves constantly probing the edges of Article 51 and anticipatory self-defense.[16] U.S. interventions in Lebanon (1958), Iraq (1991 and 2003), and Syria (2014) highlight the clash between going it alone and waiting for collective buy-in. Iran has been right in the thick of it too, from the 1953 foreign-orchestrated coup to the brutal Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), packed with sovereignty breaches and humanitarian law nightmares. The Middle East has become the ultimate lab for watching the Charter fray.

Doctrinal Developments

As time went on, new ideas popped up to challenge or patch the Charter. Humanitarian intervention, anticipatory self-defense, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) stand out. The 1999 Kosovo crisis saw NATO bomb without Security Council okay, arguing it had to stop ethnic cleansing a move dubbed "illegal but legitimate."[17] That captured the messy tug-of-war between strict law and moral urgency. The U.S. pushed anticipatory self-defense further in its

[14] UN Security Council Resolution 82 (1950) on Korea.
[15] Christine Gray, International Law and the Use of Force (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[16] Independent International Commission on Kosovo, The Kosovo Report (Oxford University Press, 2000).
[17] UN General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, endorsing R2P.

2002 National Security Strategy, claiming the right to strike emerging threats first; the 2003 Iraq invasion leaned on this, though most called it unlawful.

Then came R2P in 2005, endorsed by the UN, which says states must shield their people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity and if they don't, the world steps in.[18] These concepts try to update the law for today's threats, but they blur the Charter's sharp lines.

The Security Council's Paralysis

The Council's power hinges on its five permanent members agreeing no veto, no action. Cold War rivalries locked it up constantly, blocking enforcement. Post-Cold War, it did authorize moves in Iraq (1991), Somalia (1992), and Libya (2011), but gridlock from big-power clashes think Syria and now Iran keeps it stalled.[19] The veto was meant to curb lone-wolf actions, but it's backfired, deepening divides and gutting collective security. Stuck states then go rogue, further weakening the Charter.

Scholarly Debates

Experts can't agree on the Charter's staying power. Realists say power trumps law violations happen whenever big interests are on the line. Legalists insist its rules are ironclad and must be followed. Pragmatists argue it needs to evolve, pointing to R2P and humanitarian intervention as smart bridges between law and ethics.[20] These arguments boil down to a bigger puzzle: is international law a real leash on nations, a handy tool, or just diplomatic spin?

Continuity and Change

Looking back, the Charter's story mixes steady patterns with shifts. The constants? Countries keep cooking up solo excuses for force, steadily eroding the no-force rule. The changes? Doctrines like R2P and stretched self-defense claims adapt norms to fit the world as it is. Kosovo, Iraq, Syria, Iran they all show powerhouses sidestepping the Council when it suits them. Yet these evolutions reveal how legal ideas bend to politics.[21] The result? The Charter's framework looks solid on paper but feels increasingly hollow in action.

Implications for the Iran Conflict

This backdrop is crucial for the Iran conflict. Israel's anticipatory self-defense play mirrors its history and reignites imminence debates. The U.S. collective self-defense call fits its habit of broad readings and solo moves. Iran's sovereignty plea nods to the Charter's roots but invites scrutiny on proportionality and humanitarian rules. The Council's deadlock underscores its chronic flaws. Overall, Iran exemplifies the Charter's ongoing erosion building on past

[18] Ian Hurd, After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council (Princeton University Press, 2007).
[19] Michael Glennon, "The Fog of Law: Self-defense, Inherence, and Incoherence in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter," Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy 25 (2002): 539–558.
[20] Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (Oxford University Press, 1990).
[21] International Crisis Group, Middle East Briefing: Iran Conflict, 2026.

breaches while layering in fresh twists like multi-player dynamics and nuclear stakes. The self-defense excuses have been widely criticised by authors, people of the nation and UN as well in some cases, although we cannot deny the fact that invasions in past in the middle-east have been nothing short of shady.

The 2026 Iran Conflict: Factual Overview

The 2026 clash with Iran stands out as a real game-changer for international law and the messy world of global politics. Before diving into what it all means legally, let's get the facts straight timeline, main players, what they did militarily, and how the rest of the world reacted. Laying out this full picture sets us up perfectly for the legal deep dive coming next.

Timeline of Events

It all got over a few intense months, starting early in 2026 when tensions boiled over Iran's nuclear ambitions. Reports from intelligence circles warned that Iran was pushing uranium enrichment way beyond anything civilian, hinting they might be on the cusp of going nuclear.[22] Israel, feeling its very existence was at stake, didn't wait they hit Iranian nuclear facilities with pre-emptive strikes back in February 2026.[23] The targets? Enrichment plants and research spots, leaving major wreckage and sadly, plenty of lives lost.

Come March 2026, the U.S. waded in deep, deploying troops and gear to prop up Israel. They pitched it as collective self-defense: Israel had taken an armed hit and called for backup. Iran fired right back, lobbing missiles at Israeli cities and American bases nearby, which quickly turned the whole thing into a regional powder keg. By April, Iran looped in its proxies Hezbollah up in Lebanon, militias across Iraq and Syria spreading the chaos further.

The Security Council scrambled for emergency talks in May 2026, but vetoes from Russia and China killed any binding action. The General Assembly managed a resolution bashing the one-sided moves and pleading for everyone to cool it, though it had zero enforcement muscle. Skirmishes rumbled on all summer, with ceasefire tries that kept fizzling out.

Key Actors

At the heart were three big names: Israel, the United States, and Iran, each with their own angle and legal spin.

Israel pulled the trigger first, bombing those Iranian nuclear sites. They called it straight-up self-defense for survival, given how Iran's program loomed as an immediate nightmare a tactic they've leaned on for years, shaped by their tough neighborhood and history of do-or- die threats.

The U.S. was quick to back them up with troops and supplies, framing it as collective self-defence since Israel had been attacked and reached out for help.

[22] International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Safeguards Report on Iran, 2026.
[23] BBC News, Israel Launches Strikes on Iranian Nuclear Facilities, February 2026

Iran, not one to sit idle, unleashed missiles on Israeli urban centers and U.S. outposts, waving the flag of sovereignty and territorial rights. They saw Israel's strikes as the armed attack that unlocked Article 51 self-defense. Bringing in proxies only thickened the plot around who answers for what.

Military Actions

The operations were wide-ranging and hit hard. Israel's initial strikes zeroed in on nuclear facilities, research labs, and military setups, gutting Iran's nuclear push but also claiming civilian lives and stirring humanitarian headaches. The U.S. pitched in with joint strikes, cyber ops against Iranian setups, airstrikes, and endless logistics.[24]

Iran's comeback involved missile salvos on Israeli cities and U.S. bases, piling on the body count and rubble. Then they unleashed proxies Hezbollah, Iraqi and Syrian militias to hammer Israeli and American spots, dragging neighbors into the fray and blurring lines on state responsibility.

International Responses

The global reaction? Pure divide, mirroring those deep-seated rivalries. Western allies offered guarded nods to Israel and the U.S., zeroing in on security fears and the need to box in Iran. Russia and China? They slammed it all as sovereignty tramplings and shut down any U.S.-Israel plays.[25] Europe, via the EU, kept calling for everyone to pump the brakes and get back to the negotiating table.

Security Council emergencies went nowhere fast, thanks to those Russian and Chinese vetoes.[26] The General Assembly's take a slap at unilateralism and a plea for restraint lacked any real bite.

Even regional groups split: Arab League ripped into Israel and the U.S. over sovereignty and meddling. NATO sided with Israel's security angle, loyalty to the U.S. running deep. Voices from the Global South hammered home the unilateral no-go and stuck to Charter basics.[27]

Humanitarian Impact

No ignoring the human wreckage here. Bombings of nuclear sites and key infrastructure shattered everyday lives deaths, people fleeing, full-on crises. Missiles raining on cities meant civilian fatalities and homes in ruins. Proxies fanned the flames into Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, hitting ordinary folks there too.[36]

[24]) US Department of Defence, Operational Report on Iran Campaign, 2026
[25] Avi Shlaim, The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World (Penguin, 2014).
[26] UN Security Council, Emergency Sessions, supra note 27.
[27] Arab League Communiqué, June 2026.

Relief outfits begged for mercy toward civilians and spotlighted the mounting toll: casualty lists, displaced families, basics like power and water cut off.It's a stark reminder of how war goals crash headlong into humanitarian must-dos, making legal calls all the trickier.

Legal Implications of the Factual Context

Zooming out on the facts, legal red flags pop everywhere. Israel's pre-emptives poke at Article 51 limits and whether anticipatory self-defense holds water.[28] U.S. backup raises eyebrows on collective self-defense without Council say-so. Iran's counterpunch juggles sovereignty, self-defense, and humanitarian rules. The Council's freeze shows collective security's soft underbelly. And the human side? It forces hard looks at proportionality, necessity, and sticking to humanitarian law.

Broader Context and Continuity

To really get Iran 2026, slot it into the bigger story of the Charter wearing thin. It rhymes with old flashpoints: Kosovo, Iraq, Syria, but layers on extras: tangled players, nuclear doomsday vibes, proxies messing with accountability.[29] We're seeing the same old erosion, sure, but also law stretching to fit our wild new world.

Legal Framework

You know, the legal guardrails around the 2026 Iran showdown really boil down to the United Nations Charter, that trusty old pillar of customary international law, plus all those doctrines we've hashed out over decades of nations pushing the envelope. If we're going to judge whether Israel, the U.S., or Iran played by the rules, we've got to roll up our sleeves and dig into the Charter's core bits the Security Council's heavyweight role, the ins and outs of self-defense, and those forever-debated twists that keep redefining what the law actually says. Think of this section as your roadmap: it sketches the whole legal landscape and slots the Iran tangle right into international law's long, bumpy road toward collective security.

The UN Charter as the Cornerstone

Picture the UN Charter as the absolute foundation for how we govern force in today's world it's that foundational. The genius stroke? It killed off the lone-wolf wars of the pre-1945 era, trading raw state sovereignty for a shared security net. Article 2(4) draws the line hard: no threats or actual use of force against any country's territorial integrity or political independence.[30]This one's hailed as the load-bearing wall of the global legal setup, a flat ban on throwing punches. Article 51, though, leaves a lifeline, nodding to a state's built-in right to self-defense when an armed attack strikes a member. Weave those together, and force becomes a no-fly zone, open only in these razor-narrow windows.

---

[28] Michael Glennon,"The Fog of Law: Self-defense, Inherence, and Incoherence in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter," Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy 25 (2002): 539–558.
[29] Independent International Commission on Kosovo, The Kosovo Report (Oxford University Press, 2000).
[30] United Nations Charter, Article 2(4).

Don't forget, the Charter crowns the Security Council as the top dog for world peace and security. Chapter VII arms it to authorize crackdowns when trouble brews.[31] And those decisions? They're law for every member state no ifs and you absolutely need that stamp for any team-up military effort.

Article 2(4): Prohibition on Force

At its core, Article 2(4) is the Charter's tough-love rule against force threats included aimed at any state's turf or independence.[32] Carve-outs? Just two: self-defense under Article 51, or the Council's Chapter VII green light.

Fast-forward to Iran: Israel's pre-emptive swipes at those nuclear facilities? Classic Article 2(4) breach, full stop unless self-defense saves the day. The U.S. piling on? Same story, unless collective self-defense kicks in. Iran's counter-missiles dance the same tightrope, dressed up as self-defense but still flirting with violation.

Article 51: Self-defense

Here's where it gets juicy: Article 51 guarantees individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack hits a member state. For the Iran puzzle, this is ground zero. Israel leaned hard into anticipatory self-defense, swearing Iran's nuclear program was seconds from doomsday. The U.S. rode shotgun with collective self-defense Israel took the hit first and dialed them up. Iran flipped the script, claiming self-defense against Israel's starter pistol.

Truth is, Article 51's boundaries are a battlefield of opinions. Purists insist on actual attacks boots crossing borders. The bold crowd stretches it to anticipatory action when the storm's gathering fast. But here's the rub: what's "imminent," really? Israel bet Iran's nukes qualified; doubters shrugged it off as crystal-ball stuff.

Security Council Authorization

The Security Council holds the peace portfolio, no question. Chapter VII lets it unleash enforcement if peace teeters. In the Iran firestorm, they huddled in emergency mode but couldn't land a binding resolution vetoes from Russia and China saw to that.[33] It's a glaring symptom of those geopolitical fault lines, and yeah, it seriously dents faith in our collective security dream

Analysis of US Actions

The United States' involvement in the 2026 Iran conflict represents one of the most legally complex and politically consequential episodes in the recent history of international law. While Israel initiated the conflict through pre-emptive strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, the United States quickly escalated the situation by deploying military forces, providing logistical support, and conducting joint operations with Israel. The US justified its actions primarily

[31] UN Charter, Chapter VII, Articles 39–42.
[32] Ian Brownlie, International Law and the Use of Force by States (Oxford University Press, 1963).
[33] UN Security Council, Emergency Sessions on Iran Conflict, May 2026.

under the doctrine of collective self-defense, claiming that Israel had been the victim of an armed attack and had requested assistance. Yet this justification raises profound questions about the scope of Article 51 of the UN Charter, the legality of anticipatory self-defense, and the broader implications of unilateral military action in the absence of Security Council authorization.[34]

Collective Self-defense and Article 51

Article 51 of the UN Charter recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member State. The United States argued that Israel's pre-emptive strikes were a legitimate exercise of self-defense against an imminent Iranian threat, and that Iran's retaliatory missile attacks constituted an armed attack triggering Israel's right to request assistance. On this basis, the US claimed that its military involvement was lawful collective self-defense.[35]

The difficulty with this argument lies in the timing and sequencing of events. Israel struck first, targeting Iranian nuclear facilities before any direct attack had been launched against it. The United States then intervened, framing its actions as collective self-defense. Critics argue that collective self-defense requires a prior armed attack, not a speculative or anticipatory threat. By joining Israel's pre-emptive campaign, the US blurred the line between lawful defence and unlawful aggression. Supporters counter that Iran's nuclear program posed an existential threat to Israel, and that waiting for an actual attack would have been strategically irresponsible.

Anticipatory Self-defense and US Practice

The United States has long advocated for a broader interpretation of self-defense, including anticipatory and even pre-emptive measures. This position was most famously articulated in the 2002 National Security Strategy, which asserted the right to act against emerging threats before they materialize. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was justified in part on this basis, though it was widely criticized as unlawful. In the Iran conflict, the US echoed similar reasoning, arguing that Iran's nuclear program represented an imminent threat to Israel and regional stability.

Anticipatory self-defense remains highly contested in international law. Traditional interpretations require an actual armed attack to trigger Article 51. Expansive interpretations, favored by the US, allow for action when an attack is imminent. The difficulty lies in defining imminence. In the Iran case, the US claimed that intelligence indicated Iran was on the verge of weaponizing its nuclear program. Critics argue that such claims are speculative and do not meet the threshold of imminence.

Security Council Authorization and Unilateralism

[34] United Nations Charter, Article 51

[35] ICJ, Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America), ICJ Reports 1986

The UN Charter establishes the Security Council as the primary authority for authorizing enforcement actions. In the Iran conflict, the Council convened emergency sessions but failed to adopt binding resolutions due to vetoes by Russia and China.[36]The United States proceeded unilaterally, arguing that collective self-defense provided sufficient legal basis. This approach reflects a broader pattern of US unilateralism in the face of Council paralysis.

Proportionality and Necessity

Even if the US claim of collective self-defense is accepted, its actions must meet the requirements of proportionality and necessity.
Proportionality requires that defensive measures be commensurate with the threat faced. Necessity requires that force be used only when no alternative exists. In the Iran conflict, the US deployed significant military forces, conducted joint operations with Israel, and targeted Iranian infrastructure. Critics argue that these actions exceeded what was necessary to defend Israel and escalated the conflict unnecessarily.[37]

Strategic Interests and Legal Justifications

The US involvement in the Iran conflict cannot be understood solely in legal terms. Strategic interests played a central role. The US has long sought to contain Iran’s regional influence, protect Israel’s security, and maintain dominance in the Middle East. By intervening, the US reinforced its alliance with Israel, deterred Iran, and signaled its commitment to regional stability. Legal justifications, such as collective self-defense, provided a veneer of legitimacy for actions driven primarily by strategic considerations.[38]

Analysis of Israeli Actions

Israel sat at the epicenter of the 2026 Iran crisis, both in what happened and what it means legally. They lit the fuse with those pre-emptive strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, so we owe it to the facts and the law to give their moves a close, unflinching look. Here, we'll unpack Israel's playbook: their legal defences, that whole anticipatory self-defense angle, whether it passed muster on proportionality and necessity, the human cost of the strikes, and how their forever-precarious security world factors in. Breaking this down really spotlights the raw tug- of-war between a nation's do-or-die survival instincts and the straightjacket of the UN Charter.[39]

Israel’s Security Environment

Israel's been shouting from the rooftops for years that their spot on the map demands a wider lens on self-defense. Hemmed in by hostile states and non-state wild cards who openly wish them gone, threats feel not just real, but right around the corner existential, every time. Flash back to the wars of 1948, 1967, 1973; toss in the endless bad blood with Hezbollah, Hamas,

[36] UN Security Council, Emergency Sessions on Iran Conflict, May 2026.
[37] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Report on Civilian Protection in Armed Conflicts, 2026.
[38] Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (Oxford University Press, 1990).
[39] United Nations Charter, Article 2(4).

and the like. It's forged this proactive defence mindset. Remember Israel's 1981 takedown of Iraq's Osirak reactor or the 2007 Syria nuke hit?

Classic plays from the doctrine: strike first against what looks like an endgame threat.[40]

Anticipatory Self-defense

So Israel framed those Iran nuclear strikes as pure anticipatory self-defense. Their pitch? Iran's uranium sprint was barreling toward a bomb that could wipe them out waiting for the mushroom cloud would be national suicide. Thing is, anticipatory self-defense? It's a hot potato in legal circles. Stick to the classics, and Article 51 demands an actual armed attack before you swing back. But the bolder crowd says go early if the storm's truly brewing.

Proportionality and Necessity

Okay, say we buy the anticipatory bit then comes the real test: did Israel's response match the threat in scale (proportionality) and leave no other options (necessity)? Proportionality means your counterpunch fits the punch coming your way. Necessity? Force only when talks or alternatives are toast. Those strikes hammered Iran's nuclear setup good, no doubt, but they left civilian bodies and aid-group headaches in the wake. Detractors? They say Israel overcooked it, way beyond what survival strictly called for.

Humanitarian Implications and International Reactions

The human fallout from Israel's strikes hit hard and ugly. Nuking facilities like that? Recipe for disaster civilians caught in the crossfire, folks uprooted, whole communities reeling. International humanitarian law draws a hard line: shield non-combatants, keep attacks balanced. Israel swore they bent over backward to limit the bleed, but casualty reports paint a grimmer picture. The world's take? Split down the middle. Western buddies gave wary thumbs-ups; Russia, China, Arab League? They roared sovereignty foul.

Analysis of Iranian Actions

When you zoom in on the 2026 conflict, Iran's role jumps out as pivotal, weaving together the raw facts on the ground with some seriously knotty legal questions. Unlike Israel, who kicked things off with those bold pre-emptive strikes, or the U.S. riding in as the trusty sidekick.

Iran found itself mostly reacting to the chaos. But don't let that fool you their missile volleys, the way they rallied proxies, and that fierce cry of sovereignty? Those choices ripple with huge legal weight. In this section, we'll take it slow and methodical: their core justifications, how self-defense fits under Article 51, the proxy wildcard, the litmus tests of proportionality and necessity, plus the heartbreaking human fallout. What emerges is this gripping tension, that eternal push-pull between a nation's right to guard its own soil and the hard demands of playing by international law's rules.[41]

[40] Yoram Dinstein, War, Aggression and Self-defense (Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[41] United Nations Charter, Article 2(4).

Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

Right at the top of Iran's defense stack sits sovereignty the unshakeable principle that no one gets to stomp on your land or independence. Turn to Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, and it's crystal clear: force against a state's territorial integrity or political freedom is off-limits. So when Israel launched those pre-emptive strikes straight into Iranian nuclear facilities, Tehran saw red a blatant breach. They leaned hard into sovereignty, insisting it gave them every right to push back against such naked aggression on their home turf.[42]

Self-Defense under Article 51

Iran didn't stop at words; they answered with missile strikes on Israeli cities and U.S. bases, branding them as straight-up self-defense under Article 51. That clause in the Charter is straightforward enough: every member state has an inherent right to defend itself if an armed attack comes knocking. From Iran's vantage, Israel's initial pre-emptive barrage qualified as exactly that the spark that lit their legal fuse to respond in kind.[43]

Use of Proxies

Now, things get really interesting with Iran's proxy playbook, which throws a whole new layer of complexity into the legal mix. For years, they've built networks with groups like Hezbollah hunkered in Lebanon, or militias scattered through Iraq and Syria, using them to extend reach and shield interests. During the 2026 flare-up, Iran activated these allies to hit Israeli and U.S. targets hard. And here's the kicker: modern international law is getting tougher on this, pinning responsibility back on states when those non-state players are effectively on the payroll or taking direct cues.[44]

Proportionality and Necessity

Even wrapping it all in the self-defense banner, Iran's actions still had to clear two big hurdles: proportionality and necessity. Proportionality demands your comeback matches the scale of the threat no overkill. Necessity says force is the last resort, only when every other door's slammed shut. Those missile runs on crowded Israeli cities and U.S. bases? They left trails of casualties and shattered infrastructure, prompting real debates about whether Iran kept it measured or swung too wide.

Humanitarian Consequences

You can't talk Iran without facing the human cost head-on it was steep and sobering. Missiles arcing into urban zones meant innocent civilians paying the ultimate price, alongside wrecked homes and neighborhoods turned to rubble. Worse, firing up proxies dragged the fight across borders, slamming civilian life in places like Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria with fresh waves of fear. Reports flooded in about mass displacements, hospitals overwhelmed, power grids down a stark tally of lives caught in the crossfire.

---

[42] Ian Brownlie, International Law and the Use of Force by States (Oxford University Press, 1963).
[43] United Nations Charter, Article
[44] Antonio Cassese, International Law (Oxford University Press, 2005).

International Reactions

The globe's response to Iran? A classic patchwork of alliances and animosities. Russia and China jumped to back Tehran's sovereignty stand, piling on the criticism of Israel's opener. Over in the West, allies called out the civilian-area missiles and proxy tactics as reckless. The Arab League? They linked arms with Iran, hammering home themes of sovereignty and hands-off non-intervention.[45]

Legal Critiques

Legal heavyweights pick apart Iran's moves mainly on proportionality shortfalls, necessity overreaches, and humanitarian lapses. Skeptics point to those civilian strikes as clear breaks from the rules of war, far beyond what's needed to protect sovereignty. On the flip side, Iran's champions fire back that it was all legit self-defense, a measured reply to Israel's unlawful first punch.[46]

Broader Context of Charter Erosion

To get the full picture, nest Iran's actions in the wider saga of the Charter's slow unraveling. Their sovereignty appeal rings true to the document's original spirit, no question. Yet leaning on proxies and risking civilian zones? That just feeds the cycle, wearing down the crisp edges of our shared legal standards.

Implications for International Law

Iran's whole approach carries weighty echoes for international law's future. By championing sovereignty and self-defense, they breathed life back into the Charter's bedrock ideas. But the civilian hits and proxy reliance? They stir up fresh doubts around proportionality, necessity, and those vital humanitarian protections, leaving us to wrestle with, where the lines truly fall.[47]

Role of the UN and International Community

The 2026 Iran conflict it wasn't just a test of the UN Charter's mettle; it ripped the curtain back on how woefully unequipped international institutions and the so-called global community truly are when crises explode. Here you had Israel and the U.S. doubling down on their iffy self-defense rationales, Iran clutching sovereignty and territorial sanctity like a lifeline, yet the United Nations and its constellation of actors? They scrambled, grasping for tools that just weren't there to broker real peace. In this section, we'll wander through their collective fumblings: the Security Council's agonizing paralysis, the General Assembly's poignant but powerless pronouncements, the fractured chorus from regional bodies, the heavyweight powers' entrenched positions, and the sweeping ripples for our fragile web of

[45])UN Security Council, Emergency Sessions on Iran Conflict, May 2026; Arab League Communiqué, June 2026.
[46] Christine Gray, International Law and the Use of Force (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[47] Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (Oxford University Press, 1990).

collective security and international law. It's a tale that leaves you wondering if we've learned anything since 1945.

Security Council Paralysis

Let's kick off with the Security Council, the Charter's designated guardian of global peace and security supposedly the one body that could cut through the noise. Chapter VII spells out its muscle: it gets to call out threats to peace and, crucially, greenlight enforcement to smack them down. As Iran's hostilities ramped up strikes flying back and forth, tensions red-lining the Council didn't sit idle. They pulled together multiple emergency sessions, diplomats hunkered in those marbled halls, hashing out drafts. These called for immediate ceasefires to halt the bloodshed, independent probes into whether Israel's opening salvos held legal water, and strict curbs to keep the escalation from spiraling into something biblical. Heartbreakingly, though, not a single one made it through. Vetoes from Russia and China torpedoed them every time, turning potential action into echoes in the chamber.[48]

General Assembly Response

When the Council's gears ground to a halt, eyes turned to the General Assembly, ever the understudy stepping into the spotlight. They invoked the "Uniting for Peace" resolution that clever 1950s workaround born from Korea's ashes, letting the Assembly step up with collective recommendations when vetoes paralyze the big five. Emergency sessions buzzed with speeches from every corner of the world, culminating in a resolution that didn't mince words: it lambasted the unilateral adventures, implored all sides to show restraint amid the chaos, and nudged toward renewed negotiations as the only sane path forward. Symbolically, it landed like a gut punch, rallying moral high ground.

But in the cold light of law? No binding teeth just a heartfelt plea lost in the wind.[69]

Regional Organizations

Meanwhile, regional outfits lent their voices, each colored by their own backyard beefs. The Arab League didn't hold back, roundly condemning Israel and the U.S. for trampling sovereignty and flouting the non-intervention creed that binds neighbors. NATO, ever loyal, voiced backing for Israel's security jitters, their transatlantic U.S. ties pulling the strings tight. The European Union, true to form, struck a balanced tone calls for restraint all around, a plea to dust off the negotiating table and get serious. These weren't unified fronts; they mirrored the kaleidoscope of regional lenses, underscoring how damn tough it is to herd cats into coordinated global action.[49]

Reactions of Major Powers

[48] UN Security Council, Emergency Sessions on Iran Conflict, May 2026.
[49] Arab League Communiqué, June 2026; NATO Statement on Israel’s Security, 2026.

Towering over it all were the major powers, their reactions the gravitational force bending the entire response. The United States, boots deep in the fray, mounted a fierce defence of its own moves and Israel's, packaging them neatly as lawful self-defense against existential peril. Russia and China, on the flip side, thundered condemnation, painting the strikes as brazen sovereignty violations that mocked the Charter's spirit. The European Union hovered in the middle, urging restraint and a diplomatic thaw. These clashing stances didn't just shape the narrative they cemented the Security Council's deadlock and threw into sharp relief those simmering geopolitical rivalries that have haunted us since the Cold War's end.[50]

Humanitarian Organizations

In the shadow of geopolitics, humanitarian organizations emerged as the unsung beacons of sanity. Groups like the International Committee of the Red Cross hit the airwaves and backchannels, their pleas raw and urgent: show restraint, prioritize civilian lives above all. Their field reports painted harrowing pictures casualty tallies mounting daily, families torn from homes in panicked exoduses, essential services like hospitals and water supplies crumbling under the strain. It was a grim reminder that while states bicker, people bleed.[51]

Broader Implications for Collective Security

Pull back the lens, and the Iran episode whispers profound, uncomfortable truths about collective security's wobbling foundation. The Security Council's paralysis doesn't just stall action it chips away at the institution's hard-earned credibility, leaving us questioning its relevance. The General Assembly steps in with symbolic legitimacy, a voice for the voiceless, yet powerless to enforce. Regional organizations splinter along fault lines, offering passion but no unity. Humanitarian crews race to staunch wounds, easing suffering where they can, but they stand helpless against the hostilities themselves. It's a mosaic of half-measures in a world craving wholeness.

Continuity and Change

Iran's drama captures both the stubborn continuities and subtle shifts in how the UN and international community navigate these storms. Continuity? That familiar Security Council freeze, the perennial pivot to General Assembly's symbolic salvos patterns as old as the Charter itself. Change creeps in through regional organizations flexing newfound muscle and humanitarian actors carving out louder megaphones. The upshot? A creeping erosion of the Charter's once-iron authority, nudging us toward a fragmented international order where power vacuums fill with ad-hoc alliances and unilateral gambles.[52]

---

[50] *Russia and China, Statements at UN Security Council, May 2026; European Union External Action Service, Statement on Iran Conflict, 2026.*
[51] *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Report on Civilian Protection in Armed Conflicts, 2026.*
[52] *Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (Oxford University Press, 1990).*

Erosion of the UN Charter

Let me tell you, the 2026 Iran conflict lays bare, in stark, unflinching strokes, the relentless erosion gnawing at the United Nations Charter the once-mighty blueprint for how nations handle force without descending into barbarism. Sure, it still stands as the cornerstone document shaping international law on aggression, but its grip has loosened, battered by endless violations, endless squabbles over what the words even mean, and this creeping habit of treating its rules like polite suggestions rather than hard lines. Here, we'll trace how Iran fits into this slow-motion unraveling: the cherry-picking of rules, the way exceptions have gone mainstream, the Security Council's tragic impotence, the knock-on effects for law itself, and maybe, just maybe a glimmer of hope for turning things around. It's a story that hits you in the gut if you've ever believed in the post-war dream.[53]

Patterns of Selective Compliance

Look no further than Iran for a masterclass in selective compliance nations dipping into the Charter's toolbox only for the shiny bits that suit their narrative. Israel dusted off anticipatory self-defense to greenlight those pre-emptive slams on Iranian nuclear facilities, painting them as a survival must. The United States tagged along with collective self-defense, insisting Israel had eaten an armed attack and begged for backup. Iran?

They hoisted sovereignty and territorial integrity like battle flags to excuse their counterstrikes. Each side rifled through legal doctrines like shoppers at a sale, grabbing what justified their swing while conveniently ignoring the Charter's blanket no-force edict.[54]

This isn't some Iran special, mind you it's the same old song playing since 1945's ink dried. Nations trot out the Charter when it polishes their halo, then shove it aside when inconvenient. Over decades, this pick-and-choose game has sapped the document's moral muscle, morphing it from ironclad restraint into fancy diplomatic window dressing a world where law whispers instead of roars.

Normalization of Exceptions

Time and again, Charter breaches have sanded down its edges, turning "never" into "sometimes okay." Remember Kosovo '99? That set the stage for "illegal but legitimate" humanitarian meddling, where NATO bombed sans Council nod and folks shrugged. Fast-forward to Iraq 2003, and anticipatory self-defense ballooned, letting pre-emptive wars masquerade as prudence. Syria's endless grind since 2011? A free-for-all of splintered claims,

[53] Christine Gray, International Law and the Use of Force (Oxford University Press, 2018).
[54] United Nations Charter, Articles 2(4) and 51.

every player waving their pet doctrine. Iran 2026 picks up the thread, piling on the pressure until the Charter's prohibitions feel more like yesterday's news.[55]

Here's the scary part: when exceptions become the norm, the Charter's big red lines fade to dotted suggestions. That strict "armed attack first" threshold? It risks dissolving into hunches about "imminent" doom. The Security Council's clout? Gutted by gridlock and end-runs. Before long, international law might just be a script for speeches, not a cage for power.[56]

Security Council Paralysis

No symptom stings quite like the Security Council's meltdown during Iran a brutal spotlight on collective security's Achilles' heel. They rallied for emergency sessions as the missiles flew, diplomats trading barbs in a desperate bid for consensus. Binding resolutions dangled tantalizingly close calls to halt the violence but vetoes from Russia and China slammed the door every time. It's not just procedure; it's the raw face of geopolitical chasms, leaving the Council's promises ringing hollow and collective security looking like a noble relic.[57]

Implications for International Law

This Charter fade-out sends shockwaves through international law's foundations. Article 2(4)'s no-force pillar once the unassailable heart of the 1945 reset now bends under a barrage of creative spins. Humanitarian intervention slips in as a moral wildcard; anticipatory self-defence stretches "imminent" like taffy; collective self-defense becomes a buddy system for allies. The once-crystal clarity? Muddy as a battlefield, inviting more gray-zone gambles and eroding the law's power to actually bind the mighty.[58]

Prospects for Renewal

But hold on amid the cracks, the Charter clings to real juice, a symbolic and normative anchor that nations can't quite shake. Even in Iran, every side draped their deeds in legal garb, proving its lingering pull. There's a path forward: Security Council tweaks to blunt veto poisons, fresh clarity on slippery doctrines, beefed-up enforcement teeth. If we muster the will, reform could breathe new life, keeping this 80-year-old pact relevant in our fractured age. It's no sure bet, but it's the spark we can't afford to snuff.

Critical Perspectives: India’s Position and Global Implications

You know, to get a real critical grip on the 2026 Iran conflict, we have to step beyond the headlines of Israel, the United States, and Iran themselves and peer into how other nations are reading and reacting to the UN Charter's quiet unraveling. India jumps out as this fascinating case study: a rising global heavyweight with historical threads woven tight to both the West's power circles and the Global South's shared struggles. What we see in Delhi's stance is this masterful, nerve-wracking balancing act strategic partnerships that can't be ignored, economic lifelines that keep the lights on, and those unwavering normative vows to

[55] Independent International Commission on Kosovo, The Kosovo Report (Oxford University Press, 2000).
[56] Antonio Cassese, International Law (Oxford University Press, 2005).
[57] UN Security Council, Emergency Sessions on Iran Conflict, May 2026.
[58] ICJ, Military and Paramilitary Activities

sovereignty and steering clear of other countries' backyards. It's the kind of nuance that makes international relations feel alive, human even.[59]

India’s Historical Position on the Use of Force

From day one, India's foreign policy has worn sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention like badges of honor core to who they are on the world stage.

Picture them as a founding pillar of the Non-Aligned Movement, that bold Cold War rebellion against superpower tug-of-war; they've consistently swatted down unilateral meddling, always rallying around the UN Charter as the ultimate playbook.[60]And let's not forget the scars: centuries of colonialism's boot, ongoing territorial headaches they've all hardened this commitment into something unbreakable, a voice for the underdog that still echoes today.

India’s Strategic Balancing Act

Delhi's take on the Iran mess captures this strategic high-wire perfectly, interests colliding like monsoon waves. On one side, rock-solid ties with the United States and Israel defence deals humming, tech collaborations sparking innovation. On the flip, massive economic and energy pipelines from Iran and Russia, fueling factories and homes across the subcontinent.[61]India threads it all: partnerships that bolster security, economic needs that demand pragmatism, normative ideals that whisper "stay true" a daily dance of survival and principle.

Recent and Current Developments

Jump to recent moves, and India's caution shines through like a seasoned negotiator. They've led with calls for restraint, stressing diplomacy and peaceful off-ramps as the only way out. No blunt condemnations of Israel or the U.S. those bonds run too deep, too vital. Yet they've voiced real unease over sovereignty breaches and the war's toll on innocents, a subtle signal that principles aren't forgotten. It's diplomacy at its most artful, words chosen like chess moves.

Effects of the War on India

The fallout hits India where it hurts, multifaceted and immediate. Energy chaos tops the list: heavy reliance on Iranian and Russian oil means supply snarls from U.S. sanctions and export clamps, scrambling for backups that jack up costs and jolt energy stability. Then the human heart: millions of Indian expats in the Middle East workers, families now face turmoil, remittances that families bank on falter, safety hangs by a thread amid the instability.

US Sanctions and Oil Limitations

[59] United Nations Charter, Article 2(4).
[60] Non-Aligned Movement, Founding Principles, Belgrade Conference, 1961.
[61] C.Raja Mohan, India and the Balance of Power (Foreign Affairs, 2006).

U.S. sanctions on Iran and Russia land like punches to India's gut, crimping oil imports, rattling energy security, tangling trade webs. Delhi's hustled for waivers, spread bets to new suppliers but prices soar, headaches linger.[62] Add Iran and Russia's own export throttles, and it's a double squeeze, forcing hunts for costlier alternatives in a jittery global market.

India’s Normative Commitments and Strategic Realities

This is India in microcosm: normative heart pulling toward sovereignty, non-meddling, Charter loyalty, while strategic head juggles U.S.-Israel steel, Iran-Russia fuel, all to lock in energy flows. It's the raw tension of ideals meeting the world's hard edges.[63]

Broader Implications

India's measured sidestep reveals how middle powers surf Charter erosion norms versus strategy in constant tussle. It spotlights how sanctions and energy chokes leave states exposed, norms tough to police in a world of shards.[64]

Critical Analysis of India’s Position

Probe deeper, and India's position gleams with savvy yet shadows of doubt. Strength? That cautious finesse, balancing acts without scorching earth. Weakness? The ambiguity dulls their principled shine, credibility wavers. Dodging outright slams risks hypocrisy on sovereignty. Sanction navigations nibble autonomy. It's the middle-power bind in fractured times: interests eclipse ideals. India's Iran lens casts long shadows on law's horizon: middle powers ideal-reality waltz through Charter decay. Geopolitics, economics blunt enforcement blades. Sanctions, oil vise expose frailties.[65] Iran? Our perfect prism for law and security's fractures.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2026 Iran conflict feels like one of those big moments that really highlights the on-going erosion happening to the United Nations Charter. By tracking down the moves from Israel, the United States, and Iran, and then looking at how the UN and the wider international community handled it or didn't, this paper shows how countries are more and more likely to skip over the collective decision making processes, grab onto these debatable legal doctrines, and basically make exceptions to the whole prohibition on using force seem like no big deal. Bringing in those comparative looks at Kosovo, Iraq, and Syria makes it clear that this is part of a long pattern, and when we look at India's position, it really captures the tricky challenges middle powers face as they try to balance their strategic needs with staying true to their principles.

---

[62] US Department of State, Sanctions on Iran and Russia, 2026.
[63] Kanti Bajpai, India’s Foreign Policy: A Reader (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[64] Ian Hurd, After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council (Princeton University Press, 2007).
[65])Ian Hurd, After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council (Princeton University Press, 2007).

Synthesis of Findings

What the Iran conflict lays out so clearly are a handful of key patterns that keep repeating. Take Israel's heavy reliance on anticipatory self-defense, it totally lines up with their long-standing doctrine of staying one step ahead, but it directly challenges the Charter's pretty strict requirement that there has to be an actual armed attack before you can respond that way.[66] Then there's the United States jumping in with their claim of collective self-defense, which ends up expanding what Article 51 even means and completely overlooks the Security Council, which just encourages even more unilateral actions down the line. On Iran's side, leaning into sovereignty fits perfectly with the Charter's core ideas from the start, but when you factor in their use of those strikes that hit civilian areas, it starts raising some really serious questions about whether they're staying within their legal bounds.And the Security Council's total paralysis is a direct result of those geopolitical divides between the big players, and it absolutely undercuts the idea of collective security working as intended.Finally, all the humanitarian fallout from the fighting drives home this constant tension between what militaries are trying to achieve and the legal obligations everyone knows they have to follow.[67]

Broader Implications for International Law

When you think about how the Charter is eroding like this, the main effects for international law as a whole are pretty huge and honestly, worrying. That core prohibition on using force, which everyone thought was the unbreakable foundation of the world order after 1945, is now getting stretched and reinterpreted in all these expansive ways that make it hard to pin down. It brings in thought, whether the UN is just another League of Nation. The Security Council's authority takes a huge hit from all the paralysis and the ways, states just go around it. Isreal also did the same thing with Palestine invasion. In the end, there is a real risk that international law turns into more of a tool that some leaders quote when it suits them rather than a true binding force that actually constrains bad behaviour.

Challenges for Middle Powers

India's position in all this is a great example of the headaches, middle powers have to deal with as the Charter loses its edge. They keep stressing sovereignty and non-intervention as key principles, but in practice, they have to weigh those against their strategic partnerships and those pressing energy needs that keep the economy running.[68]
The US sanctions combined with the oil limitations coming from Iran and Russia are disrupting India's energy security in a big way and making their foreign policy choices way more complicated than they like. India's whole cautious, measured approach here really

[66] Independent International Commission on Kosovo, The Kosovo Report (Oxford University Press, 2000).
[67] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Report on Civilian Protection in Armed Conflicts, 2026.
[68] Kanti Bajpai, India’s Foreign Policy: A Reader (Oxford University Press, 2013).

shows just how difficult it is to stick to your normative commitments when the strategic realities of the world keep pushing back so hard.

Recommendations for Preserving the Charter

If we're serious about keeping the Charter relevant moving forward, there are some practical steps we could push for:
First off, reform the Security Council in ways that reduce the veto powers and build up its legitimacy so it can actually function when crises hit. Second, work toward clearer definitions and boundaries for tricky doctrines like humanitarian intervention and anticipatory self-defence to stop the endless stretching. Third, beef up enforcement tools, things like the ICJ and regional organizations, so there's real teeth behind the rules. Fourth, get normative commitment through smart diplomacy and getting civil society more involved in advocacy. Fifth, tackle energy security issues on an international level to take some pressure off these flashpoints. And last, offer more support to middle powers like India so they can better balance their strategic partnerships without ditching their core commitments.[69]

Final Reflection

Wrapping it up, the 2026 Iran conflict shines a light on both the fragility of the UN Charter and, surprisingly, its resilience too. Sure, its authority has taken hits from all the repeated violations, the constant fighting over interpretations, and how exceptions have become so normalized. Yet even now, states keep invoking its provisions in their justifications, which shows it still carries real symbolic and normative weight. The Charter's future really boils down to whether countries decide to re-commit to its original principles or keep eroding it one by one through selective compliance. To make sure it stays relevant, we'll need serious reform efforts, clearer guidelines on the big issues, and a genuine renewed sense of commitment from everyone involved.[70]

[69] *Ian Hurd, After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council (Princeton University Press, 2007).*
[70] *Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (Oxford University Press, 1990*