



Soleimani: Did the U.S. Violate International Law?

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U.S.-Iran Conflict: Strategic Context

- ❖ U.S.-Iran conflict since 1979
- ❖ Reagan to Obama (1981-2017):
 - ❖ Each U.S. Administration tried to define the conflict in limited political, diplomatic, & covert operations
- ❖ Differing views of Iran:
 - ❖ The U.S.
 - ❖ Israel

U.S.-Iran Conflict: Strategic Context

- ❖ Iran and U.S. “red lines”
 - ❖ Trump breaks the “red line” understating
 - ❖ Shocks Tehran leadership
- ❖ Threats to Iran: Internal & external
- ❖ Shift of proxy wars, political information/influence operations
- ❖ Iranian miscalculation regarding U.S. “red line”

The Operation to Execute Soleimani

- ❖ April 2019: Trump signs the authorization
- ❖ U.S. did not seek escalation with Iran. Did not respond to:
 - ❖ Japanese oil tanker attack
 - ❖ Downing of U.S. drone
 - ❖ Saudi oil facilities attack
- ❖ National security team & intelligence community: pulled together operational details of Soleimani's plan

Who Was Soleimani?

- ❖ Second most powerful man in Iran
- ❖ Ran Iran's proxy, paramilitary, political intelligence, & diplomatic operations
 - ❖ Proxy infrastructure to alter geopolitical balance of power
- ❖ Built the Hezbollah apparatus: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, etc.
- ❖ Objective: U.S. out of Iraq & Middle East

Origins of International Law

- ❖ European intellectual thought
 - ❖ Sir Thomas More, Hugo Grotius: Is it legal to kill an enemy anywhere during wartime?
 - ❖ St. Augustine: “Just war” doctrine
- ❖ U.S. Founding Fathers
 - ❖ Jefferson: uncivilized abuses
- ❖ 20th century: Assassination as a tool of statecraft
- ❖ Since 2001: U.S. & Israel increase lethal covert operations

Case Study: Admiral Yamamoto

- ❖ 1943: U.S. Navy intercepts ADM Yamamoto's itinerary
- ❖ Aim to restore morale after Guadalcanal
- ❖ U.S. seminal operations:
 - ❖ April 1942: Doolittle Raid
 - ❖ June 1942: Battle of Midway
 - ❖ April 1943: Operation Vengeance

A New Middle East/Persian Gulf

- ❖ Regional realignments
 - ❖ U.S.-Israel
 - ❖ U.S.-Israel-Saudi Arabia
 - ❖ MESA/GCC
 - ❖ China-Russia-Iran

