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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Environmental Accountability in Warfare: The Failure of International Environmental Law During the US–Iran War 2026

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the inability of International Environmental Law (IEL) to hold states liable for environmental harm resulting from attacks on oil facilities in the Persian Gulf region during the US – Iran War 2026. Current IEL instruments, i.e., Additional Protocol I and the Rome Statute, ambiguous anthropocentric thresholds which have proven ineffective in stopping or condemning environmental harms in armed conflict. The delicate, semi-enclosed marine environment of the Persian Gulf magnifies the effects of hydrocarbon war. This study uses qualitative tracing analysis to examine the environmental life cycle of specific strikes and doctrinal legal analysis of ILC Draft Principles and the Rome Statute. Attack on oil infrastructure results in transboundary air, soil and marine contamination that widespread, long-term and severe damage as required by IHL. Due to unclear legal thresholds, attribution problems, and non-binding instruments, there is accountability gap. IEL needs to be radically reimagined to meet the needs of contemporary hydrocarbon warfare.

**KEYWORDS** International Environmental Law, Ecocide, Persian Gulf Warfare, Oil Infrastructure Attacks, Accountability Gap

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### Introduction

The Strait of Hormuz, of the Persian Gulf has transformed from a strategic trade and energy bottleneck to an environmental disaster. The Strait of Hormuz that supplies nearly a third of the world's oil, has become an arena for super and regional powers to an ecological time bomb. The center of the crisis is lack of clarity of hybrid infrastructure. Rivals increasingly have targeted refineries, pipelines and oil storage facilities, claiming to have achieve upper hand over each other (Additional Protocol I, 1977, art. 52(2)). However, the laws of physics of fossil fuel combustion does not follow man-made boundaries; a missile or drone strike on a refinery near Tehran is, in ecological damage, an indiscriminate release of Sulphur dioxide and crude oil fumes that affects publics respiratory health across borders.

### Literature Review

#### Regime Critique: Military Necessity versus Ecological Proportionality

The interplay between military necessity and the emerging norm of ecological proportionality forms the framework for environmental protection in armed conflict. International humanitarian law (IHL) prohibits, in Articles 35(3) and 55 of the Additional Protocol I (1977), military operations likely to cause damage to the natural environment that is "widespread, long-term and severe" (Additional Protocol I, 1977). This prohibition is formidable on paper, but it is only a dead letter due to three significant shortcomings: the cumulative vagueness of its threshold, its anthropocentric nature and its ineffective enforcement during the conflict.

The threshold of "widespread, long-term and severe" is not defined in treaty law, customary international law or case law (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2025; Diakonia IHL Centre, n.d.). Drafting history indicates states preserved this vagueness to have flexibility (International Review of the Red Cross, 2023). Lacking effective protection for the environment in armed conflict, IHL has not been reinforced by international environmental law (IEL), according to Hulme (2022). This results in the provisions being in doctrinal limbo: despite several environmental disasters (such as the 1991 oil fires in Kuwait and recent attacks on oil infrastructure in the Persian Gulf), no state has been punished for environmental damage under these provisions.

This is because of the anthropocentric nature of IHL. The primary concern is the protection of human life and the environment is only relevant when it affects human interests and human property ("Ecocide Before the International Criminal Court," 2023). As Pazvantoğlu (2025) highlights, the recent debate on ecocide is a shift towards an eco-centric approach, which recognizes the intrinsic value of the environment. This can be seen in the 2021 call by the Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide to introduce environmental damage as a crime in Art. 8ter of the Rome Statute (Independent Expert Panel, 2021). Even such sophisticated formulations remain anthropocentric, since they enable a cost-benefit analysis, which reintroduces the notion of proportionality, often used to justify ecologically harmful military actions, such as bombing oil infrastructure (Ohlin, 2021).

### Literature Gaps: The Non-Linearity of Tipping Points

Environmental damage studies in conflict, such as the UNEP assessment and the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS), have analytical shortcomings that minimize environmental damage. First, they are based on state-provided information, introducing attribution bias as states tend to deny or minimize their environmental damage (Conflict and Environment Observatory [CEOBS], 2022). Second, they often use linear models to calculate incremental damage relative to a baseline, neglecting non-linear ecosystem collapse. This is especially important in the case of the Persian Gulf, a semi-enclosed, shallow, hyper-saline, poorly-connected, low-resilience coastal ecosystem (Joyner & Kirkhope, 1992). Marine ecology does not degrade in a linear manner, but are resilient until thresholds such as hypoxia and bioaccumulation are reached, at which point they collapse rapidly and possibly irreversibly.

This is evident from the 1991 Gulf War. Studies such as Browning et al. (1991) demonstrated that the oil fires resulted in trans-boundary environmental problems such as acid rain in a 1,000–2,000 km radius that were not initially predicted. Further research on particulate monitoring found particulate levels in several cities in Eastern Saudi Arabia were above safe limits during the fires (Amin & Husain, 1994a). This highlights the shortcomings of linear methods of assessing environmental impacts in war.

### IEL Instruments Dissected

The table evaluates various IEL instruments on the attack of oil, and their lack of deterrent and reparation effects.

IEL Instrument	Key Provision	Critical Flaw
Geneva Additional Protocol I (1977)	Arts. 35(3) & 55	Unclear cumulative threshold of "widespread, long-term and severe" damage; rarely met in any conflict

ENMOD Convention (1977)	Prohibits weather modification	Designed to combat geo-physical warfare; makes no mention of petroleum toxics, refinery fires or petrochemical plumes, the prime modes of contemporary attacks on oil infrastructure.
ILC Draft Principles on PERAC (2022)	Precautionary duties; reparations obligation	Draft principles; not binding; sovereign prerogative by states (especially non-signatories) renders precautionary and reparations duties aspirational.
Rome Statute, Art. 8(2)(b)(iv) (1998)	Environmental war crime	Only applies to international armed conflict; no non-state party responsibility; high mens rea not easily proven.

The assessment of key IEL instruments that apply to the attack of oil infrastructure reveals a pattern of failure. Most instruments have been developed to address specific historical problems such as geo-physical warfare or traditional property destruction in war and fail to capture the complex impact of attacks on petrochemical facilities. The International Law Commission's 2022 Draft Principles on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC) are a recent attempt to do so (International Law Commission [ILC], 2022).

Draft Principle 9 recognizes the duty to make full reparation for environmental damage as an additional harm and Draft Principle 13 reiterates the cumulative threshold test of Articles 35(3) and 55. However, the principles are not binding, diminishing their impact (ILC, 2022, Principles 9, 13). However, state practice demonstrates that there remains some reluctance for the obligations, such as pre-attack assessments, for targeting decisions on oil infrastructure, particularly with respect to the most powerful militaries (International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN], 2022).

## Hypotheses

This theoretical and doctrinal analysis makes two hypotheses. First, the attacks on the Persian Gulf oil infrastructure create environmental harms at or above the IHL threshold of environmental harm (Articles 35(3) and 55), despite no formal attribution of responsibility. Second, the weaknesses in existing IEL regimes, such as unclear thresholds, anthropocentrism, implementation and attribution (to non-state actors) are systemic. These factors continue to provide a "vicious cycle of impunity" for environmentally damaging practices. These hypotheses are examined below in empirical terms and through case studies, which demonstrate the need for a more effective legal framework to ensure environmental protection during armed conflict.

## Material and Methods

Understanding that present IEL thresholds for "rising, long-term, and severe" damage (Additional Protocol I, 1977, arts. 35, 55) are functionally not reachable, making a legal vacuum that leads to an environmental destruction (UNEP, 2026). Using the process of tracing, this paper tends to analyze the lifecycle of an attack: from start of ignition to the fumes induced acid rain and eventual bioaccumulation in Gulf food chain. This is coupled with a fundamental legal analysis of ILC drafts and the Rome Statute to provide a radical aligning with state responsibility.

## Results and Discussion

### Empirical Evidence: Causal Pathways of Degradation

#### Air Pollution: From Attack to Legacy of the Stratus

The connection between strikes on oil infrastructure and atmospheric pollution is firmly established in the scientific literature, but not adequately acknowledged in decisions on proportionality under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The sequence is clear, damage to refineries, pipelines, storage facilities or tankers results in sustained burning of hydrocarbons, which emit Sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>/PM<sub>10</sub>), carbon monoxide, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) well above safe levels (Sadiq & McCain, 1993). These pollutants combine to create secondary pollutants – sulphate aerosols, nitric acid, and ozone – which spread beyond the war zone.

We can look to the 1991 Kuwait oil fires. Browning et al. (1991) showed that smoke persisted in the lower troposphere and lowered temperatures by 10°C (daytime) within 200 km, and led to acid rain over a 1,000–2,000 km radius, impacting Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia. Complementary research with Lagrangian transport models corroborated the high SO<sub>2</sub> emissions and a 6% per hour conversion rate to sulphate, accounting for the longevity and dispersal of pollutants (Draxler et al., 1994).

Air quality data from Eastern Saudi Arabia (March–November 1991) revealed particulate levels exceeding Saudi Arabian standards during north-west winds (Amin & Husain, 1994b). Additional modelling by NOAA showed the presence of soot even in Hawaii, debunking assertions of localized impacts (Husain, 1994). This contradiction of remote sensing and measurements on the ground reveals a common bias: that impacts are measured close to the source rather than downwind of it.

### **Contaminated Soil: Bioavailability and Half-Life**

Soil contamination results from atmospheric fallout and oil spills. PAHs and metals penetrate the soil, attaching to inorganic and organic matter. A problem is the recalcitrance of PAHs in the arid Gulf environment, which invalidates claims of easy remediation. After 1991, PAH levels in Kuwait desert soils were significantly higher than expected, and extended over several kilometers from the source (Joyner & Kirkhope, 1992; US Department of Defense, n.d.).

These soils feature low organic matter and microbial activity, and hence low natural degradation rates. PAHs' hydrophobicity also increases their persistence (half-life) in the environment, often for decades. Husain (1994) modelling showed expected deposition of soot ranging from 1–500 mg/m<sup>2</sup> and more in the Gulf region, especially in coastal and shallow marine areas.

Actual field measurements from Saudi Arabia also showed increased levels of carcinogenic compounds and toxic metals in aerosols, proving that pollutants are not limited to crude oil, but also complex petrochemicals (Amin & Husain, 1994b). This evidence contradicts the notion of temporary environmental damage from oil attacks. When contamination remains for decades and is incorporated into the food chain via bioaccumulation, the "long-term" criteria in Articles 35(3) and 55 is met.

### **Aquatic Disaster: Spills, Hypoxia, and Drift**

The unique ecology of the Persian Gulf amplifies marine impacts of oil-related warfare. It is a shallow, semi-enclosed body of water with low exchange, causing pollutants to concentrate in water and sediments. Oil is dispersed to ecologically and economically critical areas such as Kuwait, Iran and eastern Saudi Arabia (CEOBS, 2018).

The estimated 11 million barrels oil spill from the Gulf War in 1991 affected some 800 km of coastline, with effects described as immediate, severe and persistent (CEOBS, 2018). Oil spills de-oxygenate water, causing hypoxia and resulting in wildlife deaths. PAHs accumulate in sediments and are transferred along the food chain, impacting commercially valuable fish and humans. These threats remain significant, as recent events illustrate (EBSCO Research, n.d.). The 2025 attack on the Shahid Bagheri tanker resulted in a 20 km oil slick in 18 hours heading for the Hara Biosphere Reserve, a Ramsar-protected area. This shows how attacks in the Hormuz corridor can quickly impact protected areas (CEOBS, 2025). Significantly, it's not clear if the attack was preceded by any environmental impact assessment, prompting important legal questions about the decision-making process and the "due regard" to the environment in targeting.

### Technical Assessment: Satellite vs. Ground-Truth

One key challenge in gauging conflict impacts on the environment stems from the discrepancy between satellite data and ground truth. Satellites offer quick and extensive coverage, but suffer from atmospheric distortion, limited resolution, and inability to measure sub-surface contamination.

This is evident post-1991, where despite qualitative agreement between SO<sub>2</sub> transport models and aircraft data, there was only a moderate correlation (0.40). Baseline determination is also hampered by absence of pre-war data and the conflation of conflict-related impacts with pre-existing industrial activity (Draxler et al., 1994).

Incident	Attack Details	Measured Impacts	Environmental	Proportionality Breach?
Kuwait Oil Fields (1991)	Iraqi forces ignite 700+ wells; deliberate sabotage of pipelines and tankers	500,000 tons/week air pollution; 300 miles of SO <sub>2</sub> emissions; 800 km coastline oil slick; 11 million barrels spilt into Persian Gulf	air	Iraq found responsible; damages to civilian desalination plant and marine food webs
Shahid Bagheri Tanker Attack (2025)	target vessel near Hara Biosphere Reserve	20 km slick in 18 hours; slick driven towards Ramsar-protected Hara Reserve		Pre-strike no environmental impact modelling documented; probable; due regard principle potentially violated
Strait of Hormuz Tanker Corridor (2024-2026)	Drone/missile attacks; numerous instances in semi-enclosed Gulf waters	cumulative: 1M+ liter slicks; fishery collapse in artisanal fisheries; expansion of hypoxic zones in shallow shelf waters		Yes – indiscriminate targeting; transboundary spill across shared EEZs activates multilateral IEL duties

### Case Studies: Unpicking the Incidents

#### Sequential Analysis: Escalation and Strategic Ecocide

The attacks detailed in Section IV are not just tactical strikes, but show a pattern of escalating damage. Taken together, the systematic targeting of oil infrastructure in the Persian Gulf reveals a pattern of escalating intensity, scope and ecological impact with each conflict. This escalation, from the 1991 Kuwait oil fires to recent tanker attacks in the Strait of Hormuz, confirms what others call "strategic ecocide": the deliberate and predictable environmental damage resulting from military activities (Sterio, 2024).

The Gulf War of 1991 is the most important precedent. Iraq's intentional oil spill was widely recognized as a breach of environmental and armed conflict law, spurring

the development of the notion of "ecoterrorism" (Joyner & Kirkhope, 1992). While UN Security Council Resolution 687 confirmed liability and established the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), reparations highlighted problems. Claims had to undergo complex renegotiation, the baseline state of the environment was in dispute and compensation for cumulative environmental damage (such as groundwater and habitat loss) has been largely unsuccessful (CEOBS, 2018).

The latest attacks in the Strait of Hormuz are a step up. In contrast to 1991, multiple state and non-state actors, sophisticated weaponry, and attribution stand in the spotlight (CEOBS, 2025). Despite these legal challenges, environmental impacts are evident: each attack introduces hydrocarbons into a stressed marine environment, exacerbating a history of pollution, oxygen depletion and climate-induced warming.

### Cross-Impact Matrix: Acute Metrics and Chronic Cascades

Matrix connects air, soil and marine impacts to acute metrics, chronic impacts and IEL thresholds, revealing synergies that magnify impacts beyond those already identified, and cumulative impacts that are greater than the sum of parts.

Impact Vector	Acute Metrics	Chronic Cascades	IEL Threshold Exceeded?
Air	SO <sub>2</sub> and PM <sub>2.5</sub> 10 times WHO standards at 200 km downwind; black carbon deposition in transboundary areas	Bioaccumulation of PAHs in food chains; carcinogenic PAH hotspots; reported higher asthma prevalence in children after 1991	transboundary acid rain crosses into Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan; Art. 55 "severe" test met
Soil	PAH increases up to 400 times EPA ambient standards in Kuwait post-1991	toxicity of gene in soil micro-fauna; 30-year persistence of hydrocarbon contamination; accelerated desertification	Breach of conventional warfare methods; remediation claims upheld by UNCC but contested on valuation
Marine	20% reduction in oxygen in shallow shelf areas; massive dugong and sea turtle and coral colony deaths	Disruption of food webs in Gulf fisheries; bleaching of corals exacerbated by climate change; chronic seabed oil deposits	Transboundary duty of customary IEL breached; Gulf's semi-enclosed nature multiplies responsibility of riparian states

### Lessons (Not Enough) from the 1991 Kuwait Comparison

The most important comparative lesson is not the magnitude of the damage from any one event but the lack of institutional memory from 1991. The oil fires in Kuwait produced one of the most extensive scientific set of data describing environmental consequences of conflict, including atmospheric dispersion models, particulate sampling and marine ecosystem impact (Husain, 1994; Amin & Husain, 1994b).

But the findings have not led to preventative measures. There is no universally recognized duty to undertake pre-strike environmental impact assessments (EIAs) of oil infrastructure targets, no uniform system for on-the-ground environmental monitoring during conflict, and no permanent international tribunal to rule on environmental damages in armed conflict.

The International Law Commission's 2022 Draft Principles on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC) are a step forward in this regard (ILC, 2022). They take a more expansive view of "the environment" and avoid distinctions between environmental and human environments, which may offer greater

protections for vulnerable environments such as marine parks (Hulme, 2022). But the Principles are not binding, and there remains a significant normative-practical difference between them and state practice, especially in the Persian Gulf. So, as IUCN (2022) observe there remains no clear legal framework before the PERAC project began.

### **The Intent for Ecocide: Pattern Evidence and the Foreseeability Test**

Foreseeability is a critical consideration as to whether repeated sabotage of oil infrastructure would constitute ecocide under the 2021 Independent Expert Panel definition. It defines unlawful or wanton acts that are committed with knowledge of a substantial likelihood of severe and widespread or long-term environmental damage ("Fifth International Crime," 2023). Crucially, "wantonness" does not require an intention to damage the environment; it is enough that the perpetrator knows, or should know, the likely consequences ("Ecocide Before the International Criminal Court," 2023).

In the context of the Persian Gulf, this knowledge is hard to deny. Extensive scientific evidence, dating back to the 1991 Gulf War, has been produced detailing the profound and long-lasting environmental consequences of oil-related attacks to the atmosphere, land and sea. Thus the predictability of such damage from attacks on vessels, pipelines or refineries in the Hormuz corridor is clear.

This is corroborated by scholarly analysis. Previous arguments that intent is irrelevant in ecocide cases reflect the "wanton" formulation, while modern formulations apply environmental protection beyond the narrow confines of existing war laws ("Fifth International Crime," 2023).

In sum, the empirical and scholarly evidence suggests that repeated attacks on oil infrastructure in the Persian Gulf satisfy the knowledge standard of the crime of ecocide in any formulation. This is true regardless of the status of the actors involved, whether state, non-state, or proxy, and highlights the shortcomings of existing law in protecting against predictable large-scale environmental damage in conflict.

### **Comparative Risk Assessment**

#### **Combining Climate Change and War: Synergy as an Environmental Risk Multiplier**

Conventional risk assessments consider climate change and war as separate factors, and evaluate the impact on a fixed baseline. This cannot be applied to the Persian Gulf, with its interaction of climate stress and shocks from conflict (Ding & Scheffran, 2024). The marine ecosystem of the Gulf is already under stress from rising sea temperatures, which reduce dissolved oxygen, cause coral bleaching and undermine marine ecosystems (Joyner & Kirkhope, 1992; CEOBS, 2018).

Attacks on oil infrastructure are destabilizing shocks in this fragile environment. Spills, fires and explosions do not just have incremental impacts; they push ecosystems closer to "tipping points" where they will remain for decades. Gulf environmental degradation is therefore non-linear and cumulative, a mix of climate and conflict impacts.

This conclusion is supported by research on the climate-conflict link. There is growing recognition of the relationship between climate change and conflict, particularly in resource abundant regions (Ding & Scheffran, 2024). This can be seen in the Persian Gulf where conflict is driven by and impacts the competition over water, fisheries and energy resources. In addition, empirical research shows that war is a cause of

environmental degradation: military expenditure and imports have a negative effect on water productivity and a positive effect on carbon emissions, which contributes to a vicious cycle between war, environmental degradation and resource scarcity (Nazir et al., 2025).

### Critique of Linear Risk Models

Current risk models use peacetime environmental risk assessment, which assumes certain conditions that are not present during conflict, such as in the Persian Gulf. First, they presume a stable baseline. But the Gulf has a long history of industrial pollution, regular military activity and the beginning of climate change, which results in an unstable baseline.

Second, models assume a direct correlation between size of an event and its effect. In the Gulf, in a system on the verge of environmental collapse, pollution events may have non-linear impacts.

Third, they do not consider summative effects. In the Gulf, multiple strikes on oil facilities have cumulative and compounding effects, which are exacerbated by the damage (Ide et al., 2020).

Academics distinguish between direct impacts of conflict, such as pollution, oil spills and ecosystem damage, and indirect impacts, such as governance and management. These are evident in the Gulf but are poorly represented in linear modelling (Scheffran et al., 2024). For example, oil spills harm mangrove forests that store carbon, and harm fisheries which impacts food security and displaces human populations. These compound the legacies and human impacts of pollution.

### The Water-Energy-Conflict Nexus

The Gulf region's water-energy nexus is a key but often understudied aspect. Much of the region's population receives water from desalination plants that use the Persian Gulf (US Department of Defense, n.d.). These plants are extremely susceptible to contamination by oil spills, which can make the intake water undrinkable, and to deliberate attack as dual-use targets. Consequently, an oil spill following an attack on a tanker in the Strait of Hormuz can have both indirect and direct implications in addition to ocean pollution, it can disrupt the water supplies for millions of people (CEOBS, 2025; ICRC, 2025). This converts what may be a military strike into a potential human tragedy. This link is corroborated by empirical research, conflict and war activity is associated with reduced water productivity. In the Gulf, this is through the vulnerability of desalination facilities to environmental pollution. It's important to incorporate this water-security factor in risk assessment (Sadiq et al., 2025). Analytics-wise, it enables better assessment of environmental damage; jurisprudentially, it defines the extent of potential environmental harms that must be taken into account for the proportionality determination in international humanitarian law.

### Uncovering Synergies: A New Risk Model

Risk Factor	Linear Model Assumption (Critiqued)	Synergistic Reality
Climate Change × Oil-Infrastructure Attacks	Climate stress and conflict as additive factors	Gulf oxygen level got low due to rising sea temp, increasing impact of oil spill; non-linear background of ecological vulnerability

Military Emissions × Carbon Sink Destruction	Considers only direct emissions from weapons/fuel burning	Refinery fires and mangrove die-offs eliminate carbon sequestration capacity; indirect emissions multiplier vastly underestimated in current inventories
Water Scarcity × Conflict Escalation	Water stress as a background variable	Attacks on desalination plants turn water scarcity to crisis; Granger causality analysis reveals military spending predicts water productivity loss

The Persian Gulf is at risk of destabilization from conflict-environment interactions. Failure to consider non-linear tipping points and water-energy nexus distorts proportionality analysis, concealing precaution, due regard, and prohibitions against widespread, long-term and severe environmental harm (ILC, 2022; Hulme, 2022).

## IEL Critique, Gaps and Normative Reforms

### The Proportionality Paradox

The current legal architecture faces a Proportionality Paradox: although an oil terminal can be a clear military target, the future ecological outcome for example as the 2026 fishery damage is clearly disproportionate. Conflicting parties clearly exploit the ambiguity that surrounds the meaning of "long-term" damage and allowing an ecological damage to go unnoticed.

### Investigating the 2026 Defenses

Israel's "Precision" Defense: says that strikes reduce the collateral damage by utilizing low-yield missiles. This does not answer the foreseeability assessment; the environmental damage is a outcome of the target's such as (oil/gas), not the weapon's quality of precision (CEOBS, 2026).

Iran's Ecocide Claims: While putting light on genuine ruin, these claims often unable to answer under current IHL because they are not clear attribution framework for non-state proxy actions that produce in oil spills.

### Radical Proposals for Reform

- **Codifying Ecocide:** Assimilation into the Rome Statute to consider environmental damage as a Tier 1 war crime.
- **Gulf-Specific Protocol:** A Gulf based treaty or oil rich regions must carry out essential Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) before targeting energy assets.
- **Real-Time Verification:** Utilizing real time satellite data to provide indisputable, real-time evidence of Sulphur dioxide spikes and oil spills, bypassing censored or biased reporting.
- **Ecosystem Valuation:** Establishing a tribunal that uses modern forecasting techniques and ecological economics in order to calculate loss and damage caused by wars.

## **Conclusion**

The US-Iran war has laid the foundation to introduce new International Environmental Laws. The current environmental law has no teeth against the regular destruction of the nature. This paper has highlighted that attacks on oil infrastructure are not just infrastructural damage but are continues breaches of international obligations that threaten the nature of Persian Gulf.

The combination of empirical data and doctrinal analysis unearths that a paradigm shift from anthropocentric IHL (protecting humans) to ecocentric IHL (protecting the ecology) is essential for survival (ILC, 2001). If the global community is unable to understand or is not able to adopt to these much-needed normative reforms, the Persian Gulf will become a recipe for disaster. In an era of "unaccountable ecocide," where the damaged environment is not just an outcome of war, but it's a chief weapon.

## **Recommendations**

The study calls for a reform of International Environmental Law in a comprehensive manner to fill the accountability void created by the US-Iran War 2026. Firstly, the law needs to be formalized and made a new Tier 1 war crime in the Rome Statute, making the shift from anthropocentric to ecocentric protection. Second, a multilateral protocol for the Gulf should be agreed upon to mandate Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for any military action against energy infrastructure, putting environmental foreseeability on the legal agenda and not on the back burner. Third, the implementation of a real-time system of satellite verification based on blockchain would enable the creation of independent and tamper-proof documentation of damage to the environment that would avoid methodological bias found in the data reported by states. Fourth, establish an international environmental damages tribunal that has economic damages tools to determine fair restitution for long-term damages. If these changes are not implemented, IEL will still fail to keep ecosystems safe from the foreseeable and inevitable effects of modern warfare.

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