

REDUCING CIVILIAN DEATHS IN WAR THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY & NON-KINETIC WARFARE

Consistent enforcement of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the increased use of non-kinetic warfare strategies can achieve military objectives while protecting civilians.



1 THE PROBLEM

Civilian deaths continue despite International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

- IHL exists to protect civilians during armed conflict.
- Violations of IHL still occur.
- Inconsistent enforcement weakens accountability.



! Laws exist—but are not consistently enforced.

2 WHY IT MATTERS

Lack of accountability increases harm.



- Weak enforcement → more violations
- No consequences → no deterrence
- Leads to escalation, retaliation, and instability

⚖️ When accountability is expected, behavior changes.

3 THE LEGAL FOUNDATION: IHL

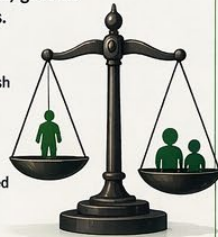
International Humanitarian Law (IHL) governs armed conflict and protects civilians.



PRINCIPLE OF DISTINCTION
Military commanders must distinguish between military objectives and civilians or civilian objects.



RULE OF PROPORTIONALITY
Prohibits attacks that may be expected to cause excessive civilian harm in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.



Civilian protection is a legal obligation under IHL.
IHL requires distinction between combatants and civilians and limits excessive civilian harm.

4 THE SOLUTION: SHIFT HOW WARS ARE FOUGHT

Increase the use of non-kinetic and indirect methods of warfare to achieve objectives through disruption—not destruction.



CYBER OPERATIONS

Disrupt systems without physical destruction.



ELECTRONIC WARFARE

Disable or degrade enemy capabilities.



ECONOMIC PRESSURE

Use sanctions or incentives to influence behavior.



INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Shape narratives and reduce conflict drivers.

✓ Achieve strategic goals while reducing risk to civilians.

5 REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

Non-kinetic strategies can be effective.



STUXNET OPERATION

- Disrupted nuclear enrichment systems.
- Achieved strategic impact.
- No large-scale bombing.
- Demonstrates how disruption can reduce civilian risk.

★ Strategic objectives can be met without widespread destruction.

6 IMPORTANT LIMITATION

Non-kinetic warfare is not risk-free.



- Can still affect civilians indirectly.
- Must follow IHL principles of distinction and proportionality.
- Requires careful planning and ongoing oversight.

✓ Legal responsibility still applies in cyber and other non-kinetic operations.

7 THE PATH FORWARD



ENFORCE IHL CONSISTENTLY

Investigate violations, hold perpetrators accountable, and apply the law equally.



EXPAND NON-KINETIC STRATEGIES

Invest in capabilities and doctrine that prioritize disruption over destruction.



PRIORITIZE CIVILIAN PROTECTION

Place civilians at the center of planning and decision-making in conflict.



PROMOTE GLOBAL COOPERATION

Strengthen international norms, share best practices, and build collective accountability.

★ ACCOUNTABILITY + NON-KINETIC STRATEGY = FEWER CIVILIAN DEATHS ★



Chadwick Bennett's Proposal Paper:
Preventing Civilian Deaths in Military Conflicts: Consistent Enforcement and Non-Kinetic Warfare Strategies (2026)



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All content derived from Chadwick Bennett's proposal paper. For educational and informational purposes.