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# Evolution of War into the Fourth Generation: A Historical Perspective

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The arrest of a serving officer of the Indian Army in the recent past in connection with the Malegaon blasts, the attack on Mumbai by terrorists, the increasingly audacious actions by Somali pirates and the peace accord in Swat Valley signed by the Pakistan government with the Taliban... more than anything else, these events point towards one stark reality... the Fourth Generation War has truly arrived...and it is here to stay.

Warfare is a product of international politics, technological advancement as well as the social circumstances. Therefore, the belligerents in war, the reasons for war and the tactics in war will never remain static, but will continue to evolve and adapt to the changes in the environment. In the recent past spanning over the last few centuries, warfare has been accepted as the exclusive domain of states. Though events such as the treaty of Westphalia, the French revolution and the World Wars enabled the states in cementing their control over 'legitimate' organised violence, warfare has not been an exclusive business of the state in the sense that it is understood today. This is because the concept of modern state is a relatively new phenomenon in the human evolution and is primarily a product of the events that took place in the Western world.

Today, the term Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) is often loosely used to describe all forms of irregular conflicts and is open to a variety of interpretations. The irregular fighters also focus a great deal of attention on the use of the latest technologies. But very often, the predominant attention of military strategists towards technological aspects of warfare results in omission of societal

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considerations. The essence of understanding 4GW lies not in studying the tactics employed or technologies adopted, but in comprehending its contextual significance. Moreover, a response strategy cannot be charted without understanding the changing nature of conflict in relation to today's globalised world. A short historical perspective of the nature of war and its evolution into what it is today may well be warranted to give an insight into the concept of 4 GW.

## What is War?

Physical violence is almost as old as life on our planet and war may be almost as old as mankind. The following are a few definitions of the violent activity that we have come to know as war.

- War is the reciprocal and violent application of force between hostile political entities aimed at bringing about a desired political end-state via armed conflict.<sup>1</sup>
- According to Clausewitz, war is continuation of political intercourse, carried on by other means.<sup>2</sup>
- War is *actual, intentional* and *widespread* armed conflict between political communities. It is a phenomenon, which occurs *only* between political communities, defined as those entities which either are states or intend to become states.
- War, in the popular sense, is a conflict among political groups involving hostilities of considerable duration and magnitude, initiated and conducted in accordance with socially recognised forms.<sup>4</sup>
- Military writers usually confine the term war to hostilities in which the contending groups are sufficiently equal in power to render the outcome uncertain for a time.

A few things stand out from amongst the above definitions: the intrinsic connection of war with political activity, the large scale of violence between political communities and participation of groups that are associated with statehood. However, it is precisely on these issues that 4GW marks a deviation from the commonly understood notion of war, which makes it mandatory to explore the concept of statehood before proceeding further.

## Nation and State

While 'states' govern a defined geographical territory with boundaries, 'nations' are groups of people claiming common bonds like language, culture and historical

identity. 'States' have taxes, officials, currencies, postal services, police and (usually) armies. They wage war, negotiate treaties, put people in prison and are recognised to have the authority to frame laws and regulate life. States claim 'sovereignty', a kind of exclusive jurisdiction within their territory. Some groups such as the French, Dutch, Egyptians and Japanese claiming to be nations have a state of their own. Others like East Timorese, Tibetans, Chechnyans and Palestinians *want* a state but do

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not have one. There are also some who do not want statehood, but only some autonomy. The Catalans within Spain, the Scots within Britain, the Uighurs within China and the Nagas within India may be examples of this group. Each of these 'nations' has or desires its own special rights, laws and culture, but not statehood. While a state is a political and geo-political entity, a nation is a cultural and/or ethnic entity.

The term nation-state — commonly used to describe any country— is a certain form of state that derives its legitimacy from serving as a sovereign entity for a nation as a sovereign territorial unit. The term thus distinguishes the nation-state from the other types of state, in that the citizens share a common language, culture, and values. A world of nation-states also implements the claim to self-determination and autonomy for every nation, a central theme of the ideology of nationalism. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the French Empire, the British Empire, were heterogeneous empires ruled by a king, emperor, or sultan and were classic non-national states.<sup>7</sup> The population belonged to many ethnic groups, and they spoke many languages. One ethnic group dominated the empire and its language was usually the language of public administration. In today's context, due to the ambiguities in the word *state*, especially as in *United States of America*, the term *nation-state* is now frequently misused to mean any sovereign state.<sup>8</sup> The ideal situation is to have the territorial borders of the state coinciding with the cultural borders of the nation, but rarely do we have such monolith nation-states, examples such as Japan, Portugal and Iceland notwithstanding. Despite this apparent dichotomy, the concept of territoriality lies at the root of the modern state.<sup>9</sup>

Nations may be "imagined communities,"<sup>10</sup> but everybody does not imagine them in the same way. Some imagined nations are larger than states or cross-state boundaries. The "Arab nation" embraces more than a dozen states, while the nation

of the Kurds takes in large chunks of four states. There can be sharp differences about the legitimacy of states and nations, both within and outside their territory.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the current understanding of the concept of state is fraught with certain contradictions.

- A state is seen as an ideal, impartial and secular arbitrator amongst many different classes, ethnicities and interests, although many states are not worthy of such lofty descriptions; one may recall what Poland did to the Jews, America to the blacks and Australia to the aborigines.
- Contrary to the above statement as a secular arbitrator amongst diverse ways of life, each state is seen— by others as well as itself— as a repository of specific cultural values though there are contrasting cultures within and there are many similar cultures outside the territorial expanse of the country.<sup>12</sup> This viewpoint is partially if not wholly attributable to the typecasting of the African and Asian countries by the imperial Western powers.
- The hegemony of the idea of the modern nation-state has made it such an axiomatic part of the conventional wisdom that resistance to the idea has to come from within it.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the progression of the idea of the modern state in the African, Asian and colonial Latin American countries was unlike the Western experience. While the West inherited the concept of democracy from the Greek concept of '*isonomia*', the Eastern empires were mostly "oriental despotisms".<sup>14</sup> Underlying the ideas that shaped the modern state in the West was the theme of the freedom of the individual, which has been frequently hailed by the Western thinkers. The defeat of Xerxes by the Spartans at Thermopylae, that of Darius by the Athenians at Marathon and the victory of Rome against Carthage have all been portrayed not only as the events that saved the West from Eastern despotism, but also as a triumph of the 'free spirit' against a numerically superior enemy.<sup>15</sup>

The treaty of Westphalia and the events leading to the French revolution gave form and shape to the idea of the abstract entity 'state'. The French revolution not only altered the course of European history, but changed the outlook of the world towards the system of governance. Equally significant was the formulation of the American Constitution, which hailed liberalism. Later, the industrial revolution and the subsequent spread of skilled labour mandated enhancement of the educational and technical threshold of the workers in the West. This made participative forms of governance inevitable, even if not desired by certain authorities in power.<sup>16</sup> Even though there were participative forms of governance

in the East such as the Chinese bureaucracy, the argument that democracy is the best form of governance is, therefore, essentially a 'Western/ Northern' one. The 'Southern/Eastern' countries internalised the idea through the colonial experience.<sup>17</sup> Because of the divergent courses the developed and developing countries took to assimilate the concept of liberal democracy, the concept of statehood has different ramifications for each of them.<sup>18</sup>

## Warfare Down the Years

As evident from the contemporary definitions, the common comprehension of war is that of an activity prosecuted by a state against another one. It will be worthwhile to take a peek into the past against the backdrop of two fundamental questions:

- What is war fought for?
- Who fights wars?

The Treaty of Westphalia, which concluded the Thirty-Year War between the Habsburgs and the United Protestant Force has now been universally agreed upon as the historic event that established the monopoly of the state on "legitimate organised violence", which we understand as the act of war.<sup>19</sup> Prior to the Treaty of Westphalia, wars of nationhood and sovereignty comprised a rare phenomenon compared to other wars. The myths tell us about wars waged for power (*Mahabharata*), women (*Iliad*) and divine justice (*Ramayana*). The historic examples tell us about wars for religion (crusades), liberation or autonomy (Shivaji against the Mughals), dynastic succession (Aurangzeb against his siblings), as well as of conquest (Alexander, Mongols, etc). These were fought by different entities such as monarchies, families, tribes, gangs, business enterprises as well as ethnic groups, cultures and religions. These wars, characterised by ever-changing alliances, were at times one-sided, often two-sided and frequently multi-sided.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to campaigns and battles, war was waged by bribery, assassination, treachery, betrayal, and even dynastic marriage. The lines between 'civilian' and 'military', and between crime and war, were blurred or non-existent. Many societies knew little internal order or peace; bands of men with weapons, when not hired out for wars, simply took whatever they wanted from anyone too weak to resist them.<sup>21</sup> Motivation of the soldiers was often achieved by giving them the right to plunder and loot. Centralised standing armies like the ones of today were exceptions and the monarchs had to depend on feudal lords or vassals to wage war.<sup>22</sup>

Though there were participative efforts from a wide spectrum of people in these early wars, it was often the result of physiological compulsions rather than psychological motivation, and wars remained mostly exclusive of the common population.<sup>23</sup> Machiavelli was one of the earlier thinkers who realised the importance of national mobilisation. He advocated conscription because he realised that the *condottieri* had only mercenary interest and lacked the necessary will to win battles. He placed soldier quality and political motivation over equipment and money as enabling factors for military victory.<sup>24</sup>

While the Treaty of Westphalia legitimised the notion that the state is the sole entity that has monopoly over waging war, it was Napoleon who realised the idea of national mobilisation and thereby paved the way for mass participation of the population in war. Napoleon integrated diplomacy and violence, rejecting the doctrine of limited wars for limited gains and insisting on absolute victory. The Decree of the Convention calling for "*levee en masse*" of August 1793 laid the foundation for mass mobilisation and took war to an altogether new pedestal. The year 1789 thus marks an important landmark in that war changed from dynastic to nationalistic war. Moreover, in the perception of the common populace, violence at the expense of the public became violence on behalf of the people and the monopolisation of legitimate violence became intrinsic to the modern state.

Thus, the turn of events from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century led to the acceptance of standing armies as an inseparable part of statehood. Consequent to this and with the development of distinguishing features such as uniforms, drill, etc, the soldier began to be perceived as the "agent of rational legal authority". It was against the backdrop of these events that Clausewitz defined war as an interaction in which two or more militaries have a "struggle of wills".

The developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped to cement the role of the soldier as the legitimate agent of organised violence. The reasons for this were technological, economic as well as social. The development and wide scale employment of artillery and breach loaded guns manifested in the conspicuous superiority of those who possessed these against those who did not. And, invariably, only the state armies could possess these in sufficient numbers. The wars in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century increasingly relied on technological developments in the field of communication, infrastructure and weaponry, which came about in the wake of the industrial revolution. These developments such as railways and telegraph were expensive and could only be afforded by the state. The victories of the well-organised forces in battles also gave the uniformed

soldiers a greater deal of acceptance and respect in the eyes of the population. A professional officer corps representing the authority of the state too emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of various training institutions and Staff Colleges such as the Prussian "*Kriegsakademie*" and the French "*Ecole Polytechnique*". The great deal of academic literature on warfare which came out in the century, including the influential works of Clausewitz, Jomini, Buelow, etc also played a role in legitimising the role of the professional soldier. The success of the Western model drew the Eastern powers such as the Meiji of Japan and the Qing regime of China to adopt similar military reformation, mostly with the aid of Western advisers. In India, the British introduced similar military reforms, but organised the armies on ethnic and religious lines.

Following the legitimacy of the soldier as the instrument of the state to conduct war came the various international treaties.<sup>31</sup> While the arrival of Napoleonic Wars did away with most of the 'ceremonialism' associated with warfare prior to it,<sup>32</sup> these treaties, continued to give war a resemblance to a team game with definite rules and codes of acceptable behaviour.

The establishment of statehood and standing militaries resulted in the emergence of clear distinctions, which were previously non-existent or vague, such as:

- Between public and private. i.e. state and non-state.
- Between internal (what occurred within the clearly defined territory) and external (outside the territory).
- Between economic and political, on account of the rise of capitalism and the removal of physical coercion from economic activities.
- Between the legitimate bearer of arms (soldier) and the illegitimate one (criminal).
- Between civil and military and between domestic legal non-violent intercourse and external violent struggle.

While it was only in primitive societies that could one separate economic and political power, the events in the wake of the rise of nation-states and industrial revolution led to increased inter-relations between commercial/economic power and political/military power. This led to greater advocacy of the geo-political school of international relations and provided new justifications for the continued endeavours by the European states for colonial conquest. The Structural Realist School of international relations is a product of this concept of justified external violence.

The two World Wars gave full expression to the concept of absolute war, when whole nations were mobilised to achieve decisive results. While World War I was fought under the theme of patriotism, World War II was dominated by the propagation of the notion of the fight of good against evil by both sides. However, both manifested in the concept of 'nation at arms'. Meanwhile, the latest technological developments such as aircraft, submarines, ballistic missiles and aircraft carriers gave rise to new military theories. The most acclaimed of these were the hypotheses of Mahan and Douhet which were radically different from the continental school. However, both Mahan and Douhet were in agreement with Clausewitz that war was a matter to be dealt by the state.

World War II culminated in the commencement of the Cold War, which on more than one occasion brought the world to the brink of a nuclear confrontation, thereby threatening the very existence of mankind. The advent of computers, microchips and sophisticated radars in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought information systems to predominance in the conduct of battles. Following the American example, military fraternities the world over began to hail the Information Warfare theory. The success of the US in its 'televised' campaigns in Kuwait and Iraq (while the Americans won the battles, whether they won the war or not is a moot question) advertised the much-hailed revolution in military affairs (RMA) theory. Tactics and technology apart, all the wars of the last two centuries including the Cold War were analysed and comprehended by the paradigm of trinitarian war, which was framed by Clausewitz in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars.

## **The Concept of Trinitarian War**

Clausewitz's "wondrous (*wunderliche*) trinity," describes the diverse and changeable nature of war in terms of three tendencies, or forces: primordial violence, hatred and enmity which if unchecked would make war spiral out of control; chance and probability, which defy prescriptive doctrines and make war unpredictable; and war's submission to rational policy. Indeed, his portrayal appears accurate, for we find these forces present, in varying degrees, in every war. These tendencies, as Clausewitz went on to explain, generally correspond to three institutions: the first to the populace, the second to the military, and the last to the government. Trinitarian war in the sense that is understood today i.e., war as a violent activity planned and ordered by the state on behalf of the population and executed by the uniformed military, as elucidated in the previous section, has its origins in two major historic experiences: the Age of Reason in

Europe and the rise of nationalism in France under Napoleon.

Intrinsic in this comprehension of war are a few ideas: that the state represents the will of the population (and, hence, by implication that the population within its geographic expanse owes allegiance to the state and ONLY to the state), that the state is responsible for the behaviour of its citizens and that the uniformed military is subservient to the State. Therefore, we have taken it for granted that the state is the sole entity with the right to declare war for what could be termed as “state interest” and the uniformed armed forces of a country comprise the sole agency that has the legitimate right to prosecute war. Huntington framed his concept of objective civilian control based on this understanding of war as subservient to politics. The famous Weinberger doctrine of the USA, which exemplifies the Clausewitzian spirit, especially that of rational purpose, laid down six pre-conditions for US commitment of forces for overseas combat. The first three generations of war fit perfectly into the state vs state conflict model.

**The First Generation Warfare (1GW) was essentially one of line and column tactics in an orderly battlefield. Second Generation Warfare was one wherein the military solution was endeavoured to be arrived at through massed fire. While ideas played a role in the development of Second Generation tactics, technology was the principal driver of change.**

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### **The First Three Generations**

William Lind is amongst the prominent military theoreticians who attempted to lay down a framework for the Fourth Generation War. According to Lind, the generational classification commences from 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia was concluded.

The First Generation Warfare (1GW) was essentially one of line and column tactics in an orderly battlefield. Technological factors also played an important role in development of the 1GW tactics; the line maximised firepower of the smooth bore musket and rigid drill was necessary to generate a high rate of fire. But these were also in response to the social conditions and ideas<sup>42</sup>; the rigid formation helped in keeping the instinct of the conscript to desert under check.<sup>43</sup> The creation of a military culture of order can thus be attributed to the stress on

orderliness and rigid drill, essentials of the First Generation battlefield. Military fundamentals such as uniforms, saluting, careful gradations of rank, etc that distinguish the uniformed professional soldier from the civilian were products of the First Generation War and were intended to reinforce the culture of order. First Generation characteristics were also evident in the battlefield prior to the invention of gunpowder; exceptions such as the guerrilla tactics of Shivaji, and the cavalry raids of the Mongols notwithstanding. The *Mahabharata* talks of formations such as *Chakravyuha* and *Padmavyuha*. The Hellenistic phalanx also epitomises the spirit of First Generation Warfare.<sup>44</sup> Although rendered obsolete with the subsequent technological developments such as stand-off attack means and breech-loaded rifles, vestiges of First Generation tactics survive today, especially in the frequently encountered desire for linearity, order and centralisation on the battlefield.

Second Generation Warfare was one wherein the military solution was endeavoured to be arrived at through massed fire.<sup>45</sup> With heavy use of the rifled musket, the machine gun, artillery (and later air) firepower, military commanders attempted to create synchronised action of various arms in a coordinated battle. Tactics were based on fire and movement, and they remained essentially linear. The spirit of the Second Generation tactics is summed up in the French maxim, “the artillery conquers, and the infantry occupies.”<sup>46</sup> While ideas played a role in the development of Second Generation tactics (particularly the idea of lateral dispersion), technology was the principal driver of change. Second Generation tactics too survive today, and have a large number of supporters amongst the hardcore advocates of artillery and air firepower.

Third Generation Warfare, also a response to the increase in battlefield firepower, was primarily a product of ideas. Based on manoeuvre rather than attrition, Third Generation tactics were the first truly non-linear tactics. In the Third Generation, the dictum of closing in to destroy gave way to the tactic of bypassing and collapsing from the rear. While the basic concepts of Third Generation tactics were in place by the end of 1918, it was Heinz Guderian, who harmonised the idea of bypassing the enemy to collapse him from the rear with the latest technological element – armoured tanks— to affect a major shift at the operational level in World War II. The result was *blitzkrieg*, the brilliant combination of land and air mobility with superlative general staff planning. Third Generation War (3GW) stressed on essentials such as dynamism, initiative and high level of situational awareness. Its successful prosecution depends on the high level of trust and mutual respect that runs along the complete military

hierarchy, which is the key for *Auftragstaktik*. The manoeuvre warfare theory formulated out of 3GW principles stresses on the percepts of preemption, disruption and dislocation to outwit the adversary. Thus, in its advanced form, the manoeuvre theory, which focussed on physical mobility to defeat the enemy, was transformed into deliberate actions intended to outthink the enemy and defeat his will. This is where the manoeuvre theory finds common ground with the theories of Kautilya, Sun Tzu and Machiavelli.

### **The Globalised World**

The immediate wake of World War II was characterised by the theme of assimilation, forced on the vanquished by the victorious, often creating non-homogeneous states trapped in the illusory sense of 'nationality'. The victorious powers defined and realigned the national boundaries to suit their designs. The engagement of most of the world in the Cold War helped the status quo for decades, but the fallacy of the post-World War territorial alignments would later be proved in fusions (as in the case of the Germanys) and fragmentations (Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, etc). The effects of forced assimilation are yet profound and the post-Cold War era has led to more and more violent manifestations of the resolve to resist assimilation and reemphasise identity.<sup>51</sup>

The crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Soviet Union in the wake of Gorbachev's reforms brought the curtains down on the Cold War. The opening up of economies also gave rise to the phenomenon of globalisation and the world leaders began talking about economic considerations replacing geopolitical compulsions in the international arena. The interdependence of states in the wake of the unprecedented level of economic activity led to the rise of the multi-national corporations as the new centres of power. The collapse of the Soviet Union, hailed as the great victory of capitalism, was expected to result in increased generation of wealth and enhanced individual freedom.

However, the process of globalisation, while leading to overall increase in affluence also led to increase in the gap between the rich and the poor. The resultant marginalisation is one of the key processes on which the leaders of

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the new war thrive. The problem gets compounded when the governmental efficiency in dispensation of justice reduces. Thus, on the one hand, there is the process of marginalisation *per se*, and, on the other, there is increasing awareness and frustration about such marginalisation.<sup>52</sup>

The age of globalisation, while enabling and empowering millions of people has also led many groups – catalysed by factors such as national decline, cultural stagnation and political repression— to a state of explosive alienation, resulting in increased assertions of ethno-religious and tribal identities. The post-Cold War world order is thus characterised by the role of cultural/ civilisational identity as a central factor in shaping associations and antagonisms, quite unlike the Cold War era when choices were dictated by factors such as perceived security interests, balance of power calculations and ideological inclinations. The emphasis on cultural identity has in lots of ways manifested in antagonism, xenophobia, revivalism, paranoia and a militant assertion of ethno-religious identities.<sup>53</sup> There was also a drastic erosion of autonomy of the state, including its monopoly of legitimate violence.<sup>54</sup> This, along with the interdependence of states and the proliferation of cheap, easily accessible technologies which could be put to lethal effect, has challenged the notion – prevalent since Vasco de Gama's landing in India— that the more powerful nations can project force against the weaker ones without fear of reciprocity.<sup>55</sup>

## **The Fourth Generation**

The common understanding of war mandates that it is an activity, which is undertaken by a military force, representing a state. In the geo-political paradigm of international relations, wars were envisaged over reasons such as maintenance or otherwise of suzerainty, territorial disputes, clash of economic interests and control over natural resources. Under this theoretical framework — which was practically experienced by the Western world during the World Wars— the states, with their total control on means of production, held authority bordering on absolutism.<sup>56</sup> The same was the case in the communist and totalitarian regimes where the state was all pervasive. But today, on account of various factors such as decentralisation of means of production, diversification of the modes of generation of wealth and explosive proliferation of audio-visual media, the states' ability to control and regulate human activity has gone down considerably. Consequently, the orchestration and management of violence began slipping out of the hands of uniformed, state militaries, resulting in appreciable erosion in the position of the state as the sole arbitrator of legitimate organised violence.<sup>57</sup>

While the classical understanding of war for reasons of the state envisages war being prosecuted only by the uniformed military, 4GW will be fought by various types of bearers of arms<sup>58</sup> in addition to a large number of unarmed saboteurs, propagandists, cyber warriors and sympathisers. Thus, today's conflict spectrum consists not only uniformed militaries representing the state but also the self-proclaimed messiahs as well as private agents to whom violence is often outsourced.<sup>59</sup>

Since 4GW arises out of the globalised condition in a "flat" world, it will be fought on multiple agendas, with sub-national as well as trans-national manifestations. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka were fighting for an independent nation, while the Al Qaeda aims at establishing a singular Islamic *Umma* under the *Sharia*. The Indian Naxalite movement, which now poses a serious threat to the governmental machinery all across the "Red Corridor", has connections with similar ideologues in Peru, Nepal, Turkey, Bangladesh and Philippines. Characteristics such as decentralisation and initiative carry over from the Third to the Fourth Generation, but it is in essence very different from the previous generations, the most radical aspect being the loss of the monopoly of the state to prosecute legitimate, organised violence. Given below are certain definitions of 4GW.

Thomas X Hammes calls Fourth Generation Warfare an evolved form of insurgency which makes use of society's networks to carry on its fight, wherein the practitioners seek to convince the enemy political leaders that their strategic goals are unachievable or not worthy of striving for because of the high cost of achieving them. The phenomenon is rooted in the fundamental precept that superior political will, when properly employed, can defeat greater economic and military power.<sup>62</sup>

In broad terms, 4GW is widely dispersed and largely undefined wherein the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. All over the world, state militaries find themselves fighting non-state opponents such as Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and almost everywhere, the state finds itself losing.<sup>63</sup> 4GW can be said to include all forms of conflict where the other side refuses to stand up and fight fair. What distinguishes 4GW from earlier generations is that typically at least one side is something other than a military

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force organised and operating under the control of a state government, and one that often transcends state boundaries. It describes warfare's return to a decentralised form, which is characterised by a blurring of the lines between war and politics, soldier and civilian, peace and conflict, battlefield and safety. Fourth Generation Warfare uses tactics deemed unacceptable by the preceding generations to weaken the advantaged opponent's will to win.<sup>64</sup> 4GW is not a military but a political, social and moral revolution, wherein the citizens are transferring their primary allegiance from the state to other things such as tribes, ethnic groups, religions, gangs and financial institutions, etc.<sup>65</sup>

4GW has also to be distinguished from terrorism or classical insurgency that happens in poverty-stricken Third World countries. It is a strange form of warfare where military force plays a different, yet critical role than in earlier generations, often supporting initiatives that are more political, diplomatic, and economic. The battles in 4GW will be non-linear, like the attempts in 3GW, but will be different in that there will not be any definable battlefields or fronts. The distinction between 'civilian' and 'military' may disappear. Actions will occur concurrently throughout all participants' depth, including their society as a cultural, not just a physical, entity.<sup>66</sup>

The primary player in 4GW will be the non-state entity that wages war, usually against one or more states. The opposing forces enter the conflict with divergent perceptions, values and battlefield ethos; the ensuing clash is bound to be asymmetric. The conflict milieu is further complicated since the yardsticks for right and wrong as well as the parameters for assessing success are altogether different for the belligerent parties. While in purely military terms, the state may be the stronger of the two opponents, in real terms – since it has more at stake politically and, hence, stands to lose more— it will invariably be the weaker party in the asymmetric conflict. Battles in the conventional sense will be rare and the magnitude of violence in individual events will be less than in conventional military conflict in terms of men killed or ordnance used. However, this does not imply that the overall level of violence in 4GW will be less than that in a conventional war.

Secondly, since it involves conflicts of culture and religion, it is likely to generate a high degree of emotion. Thus, the hostility in the minds will be of much higher intensity compared to that in the wars of *realpolitik*. If one were to relate to the Clausewitzian trinity, it will be the first element of primordial hatred that will determine the course of the conflict. Also, because of this reason, the clash may not always progress along the lines of rationality. Using

all means at their disposal, the interested groups will attempt to corrupt and subvert the will of the opposing group or community. Simultaneously, they will endeavour to indoctrinate the potential constituencies by dedicated information (which could be disinformation as well as misinformation) campaigns supported by well-orchestrated physical actions. Thus, in 4GW, it is the psychological and emotional capacity of the populations to endure that will have the greatest impact in deciding the outcome.

Thirdly, since the practitioners of 4GW are often trans-national groups without territorially based armies as such, their tactics are bound to be different from those employed by conventional militaries. They, unlike uniformed militaries, will resort to a combination of terrorism, revolutionary tactics and unconventional strategies. Much of their activity will resemble guerrilla warfare or low intensity conflict. Decentralised and dispersed actions, sabotage, violence against civilian targets and ethnic cleansing will form a prominent place in 4GW tactics. Systematic murder of key personalities of the target community or group is an inevitable part of ethnic cleansing. Many groups are also known employ mass rape and sexual abuse as a tool of defilement. All parties in the Balkans very commonly used both systematic murder and rape. Terror campaigns and indiscriminate acts of brutality are employed to sap the energies of the governmental instruments. The persistent acts of arbitrary violence can also have other impacts that can exhaust the common population and turn them against the security forces. To quote an example, during the peak of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) insurgency, orders were passed in Ireland that any one found in the streets with his hands in pockets could be shot at.

Fourthly, media control and perception management have an indispensable place in conducting 4GW. The proponents attempt to create a virtual war wherein truth merges with fiction, stories of historic victimisation are so narrated that today's war becomes a continuum of a conflict of yesteryears. Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia mastered this technique.

Fifthly and most importantly, for the 4GW warriors, the term battlefield will indicate a space completely different from what is perceived by a soldier. The tactical battle area (TBA), which is all significant for the state armed forces,

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will be the least important for the 4GW fighter. Unlike previous generations, 4GW seeks to carry out direct assault on the political structures that guide warfare. The antagonists will, therefore, attack iconic targets which constitute essential elements of another culture; the classic example being the 9/11 strike by the Al Qaeda. Destruction of religious and cultural symbols (e.g. the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan statues) will always remain high on the agenda in 4GW.

The process of globalisation has led to drastic progress in the means of communication, transportation infrastructure and information technologies. The easily affordable and available modern day technologies facilitate the protagonists of 4GW in operating in dispersed small groups who communicate, coordinate and

campaign in a networked manner without central command, making the group appear leaderless. This makes it harder to find those responsible for acts of war against the state. Thus, the process of globalisation has not only led to the change in the reasons for conflict but also provided technologies to drive the tactics in the contemporary conflicts.

4GW throws open numerous challenges to the state militaries that are trained to fight forces that are their mirror images. It also calls for a greater understanding from all uniformed personnel about the social context of the conflict. The state forces have to constantly bear in mind that since 4GW occurs amidst high levels of emotion and passion, tactical level actions can have an impact at the operational level. Also, at the operational level, drying up the bases of popular support that allow the adversaries to plan and execute their attacks will be more important than finding and destroying the actual combatants. Being seen as "too successful" militarily may create a backlash, making the opponent's other elements of 4GW more effective. Empathy and compassion will, therefore, be as important as mastery over management of violence. Hence, cultural intelligence and exceptionally high emotional quotient will be expected from all the soldiers.

It is also worthwhile to speculate on the meaning of victory under the complex situation brought about by the advent of 4GW. Conventional victory

is described in terms of the numbers of enemy soldiers killed or surrendered, or the equipment captured or destroyed or the area of territory conquered. But how does one measure victory in a war dominated by intangibles, where one does not face a well-defined enemy? Moreover, it will become increasingly difficult not only to define military victory, but also to determine political victory. Consolidation rather than decisive action may well be the primary duty of the state forces in the future.

### Conclusion

The subjugation of war to a political purpose has played a predominant role in the initiation and conduct of modern wars. The principal focus was on the external enemy when it came to the declared wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nations came to believe in Hamilton's argument that "safety from external danger was the most powerful director of national conduct".<sup>70</sup> The Clausewitzian model of the unformed military acting at the behest of the state for a rational purpose as the sole agent of organised violence fitted in well in such a context. However, today's globalised world is fraught with negative influences such as the population explosion, worsening income disparities, augmented use of ethno-religious animosities for political purposes, increasing scarcity of arable land and water, resurgence of violent trans-national ideological groups and continued growth in wealth and influence of trans-national corporations that have incentives to perpetuate corruption. While the state vs state conflict can never be ruled out, the attributes of the contemporary world are more likely to manifest in warfare of the Fourth Generation.

In this perspective, 4GW is often described as non-trinitarian war that is not representative of the actions of the population, the state and the military.<sup>71</sup> A different perspective is that in 4GW, all the three institutions have transcended their traditional limits wherein the population includes not only those living within the territorial boundaries of a state, but also the cultural cousins elsewhere, the military constitutes not only fielded forces, but also terrorists, insurgents and sympathisers, while the government comprises a lot of self-appointed messiahs in addition to the sovereigns of state.

**At the operational level, drying up the bases of popular support that allow the adversaries to plan and execute their attacks will be more important than finding and destroying the actual combatants.**

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There are no simplistic answers and no quick fix solutions to counter the challenges posed by 4GW. Thought needs to be given not only to deal with the security challenges that are thrown up by the practitioners of 4GW, but also to address the unique threats it poses to the current international architecture. We are yet to formulate an alternative to the Westphalian configuration of the world; hence, the state remains the primary representative of societies. Therefore, while the states may have lost their monopoly on violence, they have by no means lost their relevance. Solutions in the immediate future will have to be sought within the existing framework of states. Success will depend not merely on military brilliance, but synergistic application of all the instruments of the state.

## Notes

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War> accessed on 22 Jan 09.
2. Carl Von Clausewitz , *On War* translated by J J Graham (Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 87.
3. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war> accessed on 24 January 2009.
4. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/635532/war> accessed on 24 January 2009.
5. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/war> accessed on 24 January 2009.
6. James A Paul, "Nations and States", [http:// www.globalpolicy.org/ nations/natstats.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/nations/natstats.htm)
7. Political scientists classify nations of heterogeneous demography into three categories. The core community non-nation states are those with one identity group that sees itself as constituting the community upon which the nation should be based. Other identity groups within the territorial state are not powerful enough to strive for independence, but are capable to resist assimilation into the core community. In contrast, the multi-ethnic states do not have a single community that considers itself a national community for the territorial state. Multi-national states are composed of identity groups that are powerful enough to go their separate ways where the primary identity is with the particular group than the territorial state. Refer Martha L Cottam and Richard L Cottam, *Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behaviour of Nation States* (Colorado, 2001), pp.195-196.
8. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation\\_state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_state) accessed on 24 January 2009.
9. Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 54.
10. Benedict Anderson postulated his theory of "imagined communities" in his seminal work by the same title. He argues that the main causes of nationalism and the creation

of an imagined community are the reduction of privileged access to particular script languages (e.g. Latin), the movement to abolish the ideas of divine rule and monarchy, as well as the emergence of the printing press under a system of capitalism. Ref [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedict\\_Anderson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedict_Anderson) accessed on 21 January 2009.

11. Paul, n. 6.
12. Ashis Nandy, *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics* (New Delhi:Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.3.
13. Ibid.
14. Anthony Pagden, "Worlds at War: The 2500 Year Struggle Between East and West", pp.19-24. Refer [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental\\_despotism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_despotism) for characteristics of oriental despotisms.
15. Ibid., pp.27-39, 85, 148-153
16. This point is brilliantly argued by Fukuyama in his defence of liberal democracy. Refer Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man Standing* (New York: Free Press, 2006), pp. 88-125
17. Nandy, n. 12. pp. 8-10
18. The case of the Islamic world warrants a different and detailed study. Barring a few secular nationalists such as Ataturk of Turkey and Nasser of Egypt, the Islamic world had a greater inclination for the fusion of religion and politics, while in the West, the Renaissance and Reformation ensured separation of obligations to the sovereign from those to God. For a historical analysis, refer Pagden n. 14.
19. For historic events leading to the conclusion of the treaty of Westphalia, see Paul S Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500-2000* (Vintage Books, 1989), pp. 39-55. Also refer Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (Penguin Books India, May 2004) and "Peace of Westphalia", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace\\_of\\_Westphalia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia) accessed on 25 June 2007. "This treaty also formalized the contractual agreement between the apparatus of power and the general public." Refer Nandy, n. 12. pp. 8-10
20. Draft FMFM 1A on Fourth Generation Warfare of the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Marine Corps, available at [http://www.d-n-i.net/lind/fmfm\\_1a\\_r3.pdf](http://www.d-n-i.net/lind/fmfm_1a_r3.pdf) accessed on 30 April 2008.
21. Ibid.
22. The Greek Hoplites were essentially a citizen-militia, consisting of farmers, artisans as well as wealthy men. Roman legionaries were citizen soldiers; a militia was called out during war-time and quickly returned to civilian life thereafter. Refer John A Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2003), pp. 10-15. Chinese emperors employed farmer-soldier systems such as *fubing* and *weisuo*. Refer

- Edward L Dreyer, "Continuity and Change" in David A Graff and Robert Higham (eds), *A Military History of China* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2002), p.26.
23. "Centuries ago, military forces were very nearly divorced from the societies on behalf of whom they fought: crowds of adventurers out at the frontier and beyond, staging highly ritualized uber duels on grassy plains, while home society went on farming, hunting and carpenting". Michael J Mazarr, "Extremism, Terror and the Future of Conflict", available at [www.policyreview.org/000/mazarr.html](http://www.policyreview.org/000/mazarr.html), accessed on 06 October 2006.
24. Felix Gilbert, "Machiavelli: The Renaissance of the Art of War" in Peter Paret (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to Nuclear Age*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 1-25.
25. Peter Paret, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War" in Ibid.
26. Crane Brinton, Gordon A Craig and Felix Gilbert, "Jomini" in Edward Mead Earle (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to Hitler* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 78. "Napoleon mobilized all the possible resources that the French nation could amass, taking war to a hitherto unsurpassed level of violence, while simultaneously attempting to control information through various organs of the state, thereby heralding the era of absolute war." Dr. Antulio J Echevarria II, "Fourth Generation War and Other Myths", available on line at [http:// www. StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil](http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil).
27. R R Palmer, "Fredrick the Great, Guibert, Bulow: From Dynastic to National War" in Earle (ed), n. 26.
28. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*(Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2005), pp. 16-17. Also refer Van Creveld, n. 9, p. 37
29. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/635532/war> accessed on 24 Jan 2009. It is thus argued that what most of us perceive today as war is a specific phenomenon that took shape in Europe between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Kaldor, Ibid, pp. 13-15.
30. The American Civil War demonstrated the significant role that railways and telegraph could play towards successful war effort. The German General Staff put in a great deal of effort to study these and incorporate rail mobilisation in their logistic support plans. Refer Martin Van Creveld, *Art of War*(New York: Smithsonian Books, Harper Collins, 2005), pp. 118-141.
31. These are the Geneva Convention of 1864, which was inspired by Henri Dumant, the founder of the Red Cross, the St Petersburg Declaration of 1868, the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, the London Conference of 1908 and further agreements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kaldor, n. 28 p. 24.
32. H Rothfells, "Clausewitz", in Earle (ed), n. 26, p.99.
33. To quote, "Before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, war was essentially conducted as a team game, with an ethos and a final whistle, often with code of rules." Richard E Simpkin

- Race to the Swift; Thoughts on Twenty First Century Warfare* (Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1986), p.271. Also refer Kaldor, n. 28, p.24 and Van Creveld, n. 9, p.40.
34. Kaldor, n. 28, p.20.
  35. Edward Mead Earle, "Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton and Friedrich List: The Economic Foundation of Military Power" in Earle (ed), n. 26, p.117.
  36. For details on structural realism, see [http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Structural\\_Reality](http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Structural_Realism)
  37. <http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/Trinity/TRININTR.htm>, Also refer Echevarria, n. 26, The exact nature of war will be dependent on the interplay between the three tendencies described by Clausewitz. See Michael I Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), pp. 95-117.
  38. Van Creveld, n. 9, p.26.
  39. Ibid., pp.36-7, Kaldor, n. 28 p.15.
  40. Huntington, in his path-breaking work on civil-military relations lays down that management of violence is the central skill in the professional character of expertise of the Officer Corps. See Samuel P Huntington, *Soldier and the State* (Dehradun: Natraj Publishers).
  41. These included protection of vital national interest, whole-hearted commitment to win and reasonable assurance of support from the people of the USA. Handel, n.37, pp.307-326.
  42. William S Lind, "Understanding Fourth Generation War", available at [www.LewRockwell.com](http://www.LewRockwell.com), accessed on 26 October 2007. Also refer William S Lind, Col Keith Nightingale (USA), Capt John F Schmitt (USMC), Col Joseph W Sutton (USA), and Lt Col Gary I Wilson (USMCR) , "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation" in *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989, pp. 22-26, available at [http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/4th\\_gen\\_war\\_gazette.htm](http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/4th_gen_war_gazette.htm).
  43. 18<sup>th</sup> century armies were kept together by rigid discipline, taught to march and fight in strict formations under the supervision of officers. Rothfells, n.32,p. 97
  44. In ancient Greece, the close Phalanx formation not only maximised the brute power of the Hoplites but also prevented the individual soldier from deserting. Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (New Delhi: Bookmart Publishers, 2002), p.41.
  45. Thomas X Hammes, "4th-Generation Warfare: Our Enemies Play to Their Strengths," *Armed Forces Journal*, November 2004, pp. 40-44
  46. Lind, n. 42.
  47. Ibid.
  48. J F C Fuller and Liddell Hart played important roles in conceptualising the 3GW doctrine. It is also argued in certain circles that the latter was the sole originator of

- the ideas which the Germans implemented in World War II. Van Creveld, n. 9, pp.160-187.
49. Richard E Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (Brassey's, UK, 1985), pp. 222-240
  50. For more reading on the manoeuvre warfare theory, see Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver Warfare Theory and Airland Battle* (Ballantine Books, 1995), William S Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Westview Press, 1985), and Simpkin, *Ibid.*
  51. Universalism and unilateralism are often identified as likely sources of conflict. Refer Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books), pp. 184-186.
  52. Sudeep Chakravarti, *Red Sun: Travels in the Naxalite Country* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2008), pp. 96-97.
  53. Huntington, n.40, pp. 125-30. Also refer Mazarr, n. 51.
  54. One argument is that the autonomy of the state is eroded from above by transnationalisation of military forces, increasing interdependence of states and from below by privatisation. Kaldor, n. 28, pp. 4-5
  55. Van Creveld, n. 9, p. 26.
  56. For the philosophy of absolutism refer "Absolutism (European history)", available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolutism\\_\(European\\_history\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolutism_(European_history)) accessed on 18 August 2009.
  57. The essential premise for Max Weber's conceptualisation of the state is the monopoly on "legitimate" violence. To some, the word "legitimate" has normative meaning, i.e. that the state *should* monopolise violence. To others, it has positive connotations, i.e. people accept the "legitimacy" of the state monopoly. However, Weber claimed neither that the people "accepted" the legitimacy, nor that the state should monopolise the legitimate use of violence, but simply defined the state as such. Refer [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly\\_on\\_violence#cite\\_note-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly_on_violence#cite_note-0)
  58. Mary Kaldor identifies five types of armed fighters, namely, regular military or remnants thereof representing the belligerent state as well as non-state groups, paramilitary groups, self defence units, foreign mercenaries and regular troops under international auspices. Kaldor, n. 28, pp.92-95.
  59. These private entities could include the ones fighting for purely economic reasons such as Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), an organisation formed by retired American generals or the ones ideologically indoctrinated for "someone else's cause", more often than not on ethno-religious affiliations. However, in most cases, it is a complex mix of the monetary incentives, spirit of adventure and the

issues of identity that draw these private groups into the new world conflicts. Thus, in the Bosnian conflict, there were organisations such as Arkan's "Tigers" and Seselj's "White Eagles" fighting on the Serb side and the Garibaldi units comprising of Italians and Jusuf Prazine's "Wolves" representing the Croats. Kaldor, n. 28, pp.46-49. One may also refer to the recent case of the US Blackwater Corporation which was hired by the CIA.

60. Borrowed from Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, April 2005).
61. The Conference of the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations in South Asia (CCOMPOSA) took out a ten point agenda in 2002 which gives an insight in to the aims of this international organisation. Chakravarti, n. 52, pp. 91-94.
62. Thomas X Hammes, "Insurgency: Modern Warfare Evolves into a Fourth Generation," in Strategic Forum, Institute of National Strategic studies, available at <http://www.ndu.edu/inss>, accessed on 28 January 2009.
63. Lind, n. 42.
64. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4GW>
65. Draft FMFM 1-A "Fourth Generation War", Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Marine Corps.
66. Lind, n.42.
67. Yugoslavia was a state with many nations. The failure of Markovic to establish an all Yugoslav television '*Yutel*' and subsequent exploitation of the regional, 'nationalistic' media by Milosevic had a major role in perpetuation of mass violence by the Serbs. Kaldor, n. 28, pp. 38-40.
68. The first two generations of war were waged between armies: men and materiel introduced to a battlefield, or onto a front, with the intent to destroy each other, while civilian targets were left alone, for the most part. Third Generation Warfare was waged against the industrial structures that made warfare possible: factories, supply lines, and railroad systems, with the opposing military acting as a shield to defend those resources. Refer "Fourth Generation Warfare", available at [http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Fourth-generation\\_warfare](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Fourth-generation_warfare) accessed on 22 February 2009.
69. Lind, n. 42.
70. Edward Mead Earle, "Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton and Friedrich List: The Economic Foundation of Military Power" in Earle (ed), n. 26, p.117.
71. Martin Van Creveld, whose influential work *Transformation of War* which set in motion long series of debates, mooted the concept of non-trinitarian war.