

Staying the Course in ‘Fourth-Generation Warfare’: Persuasion and Perseverance in the Era of the Asymmetric Bargaining War

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Introduction

The United States brought 20th century warfare to a peak in the 1980s and 1990s. A combination of spending power, great advances in military technologies, and the refinement of ‘effects-based’ planning techniques produced what appeared to be a revolution in military affairs. The ability of the United States military to support itself in almost any theatre, observe and understand the battlefield, coordinate its forces, and strike precisely at targets gave it unrivalled power on the conventional battlefield. However, just as the US had got all dressed up, there was nowhere to go. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1989–1991, the only real peer competitor took its leave and Iraq was scarcely a partner worthy of such finery. The reality of the 1990s was that warfare was heading down the spectrum toward Lower Intensity Conflicts (LICs) in which bands of criminals, terrorists, insurgents, and warlords were the problem. Many of these small actors had been empowered by the new technologies and openness of late 20th century globalization, and it was soon clear that managing them was not going to be a straightforward business. Indeed, there were reasons to believe that the US and other Western states would struggle to marshal the will and capabilities to see through conflicts with such adversaries successfully. From the school of hard knocks, though, Western strategists began to lay the foundations for a new generation of warfare, although the doctrine and practice of this new generation have yet to be fully realized.

Into the Fourth-Generation of Warfare

In an astonishingly forward-thinking article in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in October 1989, William S. Lind and his co-authors tried to make sense of what seemed to be potentially contradictory trends shaping the future of war. The United States was now the master of a model of warfare that brought together superior firepower, mobility, connectivity, and intelligence capabilities, and marshalled them with combined arms, deep battle, and effects-based planning techniques. Yet, in doing so, adversaries seemed likely to respond by dispersing and devolving in order to survive. Lind et al. were not sure where things were going, but could see that warfare was on the verge of a generational shift – what they argued to be the fourth-generation.¹ If the first three generations of warfare since Napoleon had led to the deployment of larger armies with ever more firepower and mobility, the fourth-generation would be much more

dissipated. Fewer combatants would have to be more deeply immersed in the landscape. Greater dispersal might even go as far as taking on non-national and transnational forms, presenting serious difficulties for those operating within the framework of the existing state system.² Future warfare would be less about massing to attack the enemy from outside and more about undermining it from within. Lind et al perceived that 'psychological operations may become the dominant operational and strategic weapon in the form of media/information intervention'.³ The changes involved seemed likely to be historic:

for about the last 500 years, the West has defined warfare . . . because the West's strength is technology, it may tend to conceive of a fourth-generation in technological terms. However, the West no longer dominates the world. A fourth-generation may emerge from non-Western cultural traditions . . . The fact that some non-Western areas, such as the Islamic world, are not strong in technology may lead them to develop a fourth-generation through ideas rather than technology. The genesis of an idea-based fourth-generation may be visible in terrorism. This is not to say that terrorism is fourth-generation warfare, but rather that elements of it may be signs pointing toward a fourth-generation . . . the more successful terrorists appear to operate on broad mission orders that carry down to the level of the individual terrorist. The 'battlefield' is highly dispersed and includes the whole of the enemy's society.⁴

This article initially attracted little interest, but as the 1990s unfolded the research agenda suggested received more attention. A number of authors, notably Martin Van Creveld, Edward N. Luttwak, Mary Kaldor, Colonel Thomas X. Hammes (US Marine Corps), and General Rupert Smith (British Army) furthered the idea that the Clausewitzian model of war focused around state-centred agents and the decisive use of force was being superseded.⁵ In a *Foreign Affairs* article in 1995, Edward Luttwak observed that great power competition was not a feature of the post-Cold War world, and with force being used only in lesser and internal conflicts, 'the preconditions of Napoleonic war-making, or for that matter of military interventions as specified in the Weinberger-Powell-Cheney doctrines, are therefore absent'.⁶ By the time that Lind and his co-authors penned 'Fourth-Generation Warfare: Another Look' in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in December 1994, it had already become clear that LICs in the context of contemporary globalization would be central to any understanding of a fourth-generation.⁷ It could hardly be argued that insurgent-type conflict was new but it now seemed that conflicts between states and a new kind of 'glocal' insurgent (that is, those operating in local and global realms simultaneously) – empowered in some places by the new technologies and openness of late 20th century globalization – would be the dominant idiom of warfare for the foreseeable future. Certainly, the way that contemporary globalization had set up a global communications network, increased the flows of goods and peoples around the world, and made weapons and other materials more available, enabled some small non-state groups to project themselves across the world. The outbreak of the 'global war on terrorism' from 11 September 2001 would provide the ultimate example of a fourth-generation enemy and battlefield.

A number of important points emerged from the theorizing about fourth-generation warfare. The ultimate aspiration of third-generation forces was to concentrate and manoeuvre in such a way as to apply decisive force so that the enemy might ultimately be 'disarmed and subjected to our will' (in the Clausewitzian sense). On the highly dissipated fourth-generation battlefield, the use of decisive force against extensively organized non-state actors looked much more difficult to achieve. While it still might be possible to apply decisive force at a tactical level – for instance, a town might be surrounded and most of the insurgents therein killed or captured – it was very difficult to imagine that fourth-generation adversaries could be decisively knocked out by military means at an operational (country-wide) or strategic (regional/global-wide) level. The broader context of contemporary globalization also meant that the political conditions for the use of decisive force were absent. Neither domestic nor international opinion were likely to tolerate Western militaries applying the kind of disproportionate force required to subdue enemies who might be hidden across entire societies. The bottom line was that fourth-generation warfare was no longer about the use of decisive force but rather, about coercive force: that is, war was no longer about disarming your opponent in order to subject him to your will, but about persuading and inducing him to give up or come to terms. Fourth-generation warfare is the era of the asymmetric bargaining war.

In a series of books and articles, Thomas X. Hammes has done much to chart the dynamics of fourth-generation warfare. While small bands of insurgents could not hope to defeat Western states or their proxies, Hammes observed in *Strategic Forum* in January 2005 that, 'advances in communications technology and the growth of formal and informal networks have greatly increased the ability of the insurgents to attack the will of enemy decision-makers directly'.⁸ For both sides, the operational art of fourth-generation warfare involved managing the persuasion of various audiences and information networks – that is, supporters, the undecided at local, regional, and global levels, and enemy public opinion – with the aim of focusing persuasive power against enemy decision-makers. Little wonder, then, that news networks and journalists have been increasingly identified and targeted as participants in warfare since the 1990s. The demonstration – or marketing – of superior willpower was central to this new persuasive theatre. For some Islamic terrorists after 9/11, for instance, the practice of suicide bombings, kidnappings, and videoed beheadings provided an extreme form of persuasion, a stark representation of a politico-cultural idea, and the demonstration of superior willpower vis-à-vis the enemy.

For Western armed forces, fourth-generation conflicts posed inherent problems. Fourth-generation opponents may be very undesirable as bargaining partners, with states often regarding it as beneath their dignity or moral principles even to recognize them. Yet, to stick to the old formula of never bargaining with terrorists may be the prescription for endless, irresolvable conflict. Bargaining processes are also liable to be prolonged. The reality of the fourth-generation is one of relatively low-intensity attrition in which the ability to persevere is vital. Perseverance can be a challenge for Western states, especially in a political context in which they choose to act as global policemen and social workers. While suppressing the aggregate level of

chaos in the world is vital to the maintenance of the system of liberal-type globalization, it remains difficult to make the case in Western societies for going to war without defining a direct national interest. US politicians and public opinion, especially, remain wary of committing their forces unless Americans are at risk or national security at stake. If the national interest is not clear, the preparedness to persevere in the face of losses is limited, with the Somalia intervention in 1992–1993 standing as the ultimate example of a weakly supported intervention that quickly passed the cost-benefit tipping point.

Following Somalia, it became widely assumed that the aversion of Westerners to casualties was a serious limitation. Edward Luttwak observed that the need to use ‘military force collide[d] with the general refusal of the American public to sanction interventions in place after place without end’.⁹ Luttwak argued that the rise of a ‘post-heroic’ culture in the West was related to the intense individualism of Western societies and the higher value put on young people when families produced only one or two offspring. Moreover, inherent to the new era was an asymmetry of willpower between the ‘professional, salaried, pensioned, and career-minded’ soldiers of the West and adversaries ‘inflamed by nationalism or religious fanaticism’.¹⁰ While it is possible to overstate Western sensitivity to casualties, the proposition does have some validity. Western politicians do find it difficult to justify losses in the context of wars of choice and even where national interests are powerful – as for the US in Iraq – it is a struggle to keep the support of a viable proportion of the voting public once casualties mount. The war in Iraq, for instance, was always a race for the Bush administration: specifically, to get an appropriate outcome in place before the costs of trying to do so became unacceptable to the balance of public opinion and Congress. The timing of national elections in the US did affect the management of the Iraq war, with incipient pressure to force the pace of an exit strategy at the expense of final outcomes.

Casualty aversion was not just a matter of how many people Western societies were prepared to lose, but also how many they were prepared to kill. At a time when the enemy tended to be characterized in the form of errant leaders, scenes of ordinary people being killed and made homeless undermine the moral and political foundations of perseverance.¹¹ The kind of violence that US and European forces have used against insurgents and host populations in the past is simply not feasible in the contemporary context.¹² While the conduct of the current global war on terrorism has seen serious abuses of human rights, the systematic use of murder and torture is difficult to sustain today, as is the use of anything other than targeted force against general populations. In particular, reprisals and collective punishments designed to persuade or induce local populations into giving up insurgents normally can only go so far today without becoming seriously counterproductive.

One of the key problems for Western commanders is that precise targeting on the fourth-generation battlefield is difficult. The immersion of the enemy across whole societies as well as the casualty aversion of Western forces mean that civilians continue to be very much in the firing line. In the interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, US planners put much thought into reducing collateral damage, but could not change the nature of the beast. In particular, while great strides have been

made in the precision of aerial bombing, it remains amongst the most imprecise ways of using force. The bombing of value or persuasive targets that killed civilians during the Kosovo intervention in 1999, for instance, gave the Milosevic regime a chip in the persuasive political game and may have acted to prolong the war. At times it was difficult to resist trying to apply decisive force when deliberately provoked by insurgents. When US forces set about demolishing much of Fallujah in 2004, they eventually succeeded in killing or chasing off most of the insurgents but the knock-on effects were serious. US commanders doubtless hoped that Fallujah might serve as a warning to other towns harbouring insurgents, but it seems likely that one of the unintended effects was to 'persuade' new volunteers and fence-sitters to flock to the enemy's banner in Iraq and beyond.¹³ Fallujah was eventually a tactical-level victory (Fallujah-wide), but a self-inflicted defeat at an operational level (Iraq-wide) and strategic level (global war of terrorism-wide). In short, the kind of devastating violence used to pacify populations in the past was no longer morally or practically available to Western armed forces. In the fourth-generation context, large-scale kinetic (that is, physically destructive) operations were likely to have knock-on effects that were sprawling, unpredictable, and difficult to contain.

Another real limitation on Western states, sharpened by the heightened transparency brought by globalized media coverage, is the rule of law. This is one of the historic foundations of Western democracy and, to varying degrees, Western policymakers and soldiers are constrained by both national laws and international legal conventions. Existing standards of the rule of law have come under real pressure from the US during the global war on terrorism. Aware that the enemy did not adhere to the established value and rule systems, the Bush administration was inclined to put aside self-imposed limitations in favour of gathering intelligence and instituting a punitive form of detention intended to punish al-Qaeda members as well as to intimidate sympathizers and host communities. The US 'gulag archipelago' of Bagram, Guantanamo, and a host of other secret locations was a twilight zone for the rule of law, resistant to the attempts of critics and lawyers to scrutinize. At the time of writing the Bush administration had managed to continue to keep the system separate, although in mid 2004 the US Supreme Court edged towards bringing it under the jurisdiction of US courts, with federal courts then moving to delay proposals for extraordinary military tribunals.¹⁴ While Guantanamo Bay itself might eventually evolve into something more benign, in an era in which opponents were likely to look and act like 'illegal combatants', the Guantanamo model might well become an enduring feature of fourth generation conflict.¹⁵

In the meantime, America's secret prison system was a bargain with the devil: it undoubtedly delivered desired intelligence-gathering and intimidation effects, but at a serious cost. When the culture of America's gulag was taken to Iraq, the subsequent revelations about Abu Ghraib prison were a colossal 'hearts and minds' disaster in Iraq and beyond. The gradual exposure of US detention and interrogation practices had strategic-level costs that were difficult to ignore. The failure of rhetoric implied by such human-rights abuses undermined US arguments with respect to a number of the key audiences on the persuasive battlefield. The story of US injustice and double standards resonated amongst Muslim audiences. The fissure between the

US and Europe about the conduct of the war was widened. In fact, the transatlantic row which broke out in late 2005 over the practice of 'extraordinary rendition' – that is, secretly whisking off suspects for 'questioning' to undisclosed locations in such places as Egypt and Morocco – began to mark the boundaries of what the Bush administration could get away with. When light was finally shed into the twilight zone, it was apt to dissolve. At the end of December 2005, despite earlier arguing against it, President Bush signed the Detainees Treatment Act, which clarified the prohibitions on cruel and degrading treatment for any prisoner, anywhere in US custody. In the longer run, bad practices were difficult to sustain not only because most Americans liked to think of their country as good, but also because it diminished the 'soft power' of the US in the world. The need to devise some alternative to the Guantanamo model was pressing.

While it might be difficult to resist opting for the immediate returns of secret prisons and interrogations, the practical argument for maintaining human-rights standards in the context of 'persuasive war' was strong. The case was succinctly summed up by the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, in a speech at the Royal United Services Institute on 16 January 2006 when he argued that:

If we want to be seen to deliver justice and offer a stronger and better worldview than that of the terrorist, we have to be seen to stand by our values and our strengths. We have to show that when it comes to counter-terrorism we practice what we preach . . . these days you often hear the accusation made that the scales have tipped away from human rights and towards counter-terrorism. It is a false dichotomy. There need be no zero-sum equation between human rights and counter-terrorism. Counter-terrorism measures are there to help us preserve a democratic and free society . . . we respect and promote human rights not only because it is the correct thing to do but because that is one of the most effective ways to undermine the terrorists.¹⁶

A balance had to be struck, yet resisting overreaction not only reduced the terrorists' leverage on the persuasive battlefield but also made a pitch for the hearts and minds of the target audiences. In the art of persuasion, there is nothing worse than the failure of rhetoric.

For Western states, fourth-generation warfare had to be limited. The fact that fourth-generation opponents were not constrained by the same norms or laws might rankle with many in the West, but this asymmetry of will and ruthlessness was a fact of life in the political context. It was really no good lamenting the lack of moral fibre in the West, or blaming the media, or warning off the criticisms of opposition politicians, or damning the concerns of international opinion. Western policymakers could not seriously expect to suppress the workings of Western democracy indefinitely, nor ignore the limitations of the rules of the game in the liberal international system. Rather than bemoaning what could not be done, the real task at hand was to fully exploit what could. Western states might not be able to out-terrorize or out-persevere some fourth-generation opponents but they did possess powerful tools. What was required was to design a doctrine and an effects-based map (that is, a conceptual map of the complex battlespace facilitating more systematic and

targeted operations against the enemy or other relevant actors) for fourth-generation warfare that properly utilized the constructive powers that the West could summon.

Towards a Doctrine for Fourth-Generation Warfare

Asymmetric threats and LICs have been a prominent feature of Western debates about security since the 1990s, but it was the advent of the global war on terrorism and the Iraq War that really shifted the focus for Western militaries, especially in the US. Events in Iraq after 2003 provided the most vivid demonstration that a doctrine for the fourth-generation had yet to be formulated, much less incorporated. US armed forces went into Iraq as the masters of third-generation warfare and, in what must go down as the nearest thing to blitzkrieg since the summers of 1940 and 1941, quickly dispatched the Iraqi regime. While the force of US arms and information operations were ostensibly the authors of the disintegration of the Iraqi Army, implicit in the process was the decision of thousands of Iraqi soldiers to literally vote with their feet and abandon the third-generation battlefield, and to continue their resistance on a fourth-generation plane. The US had neither a coherent plan, nor the forces in place to deal with such an eventuality. The US had gone to war under the direction of third-generation radicals, Donald Rumsfeld and Tommy Franks, when it really needed fourth-generation enthusiasts.¹⁷ The failure to fully appreciate that a new generation of warfare was already required was almost as marked in Iraq in 2003 as it had been for European armies in 1914.

As the insurgency emerged in Iraq, the US stuck to its initial objectives and reflexively sought to defeat the insurgents decisively by force. US forces adapted quickly to unanticipated circumstances. Effects-based schematics – such as link charts and flow diagrams – were deployed to coordinate intelligence-gathering and precision strikes. New peace-support operations techniques were introduced. The Commander's Emergency Response Programs provided funds to local commanders in order for them to undertake local civil-affairs initiatives aimed at winning Iraqi hearts and minds. US forces also made significant strides in developing the concept and practice of full spectrum operations. In an article in *Military Review* in mid 2005, Major General Peter W. Chiarelli (US Army) and Major Patrick Michaelis (US Army) outlined the kind of full spectrum operations that they had implemented in Baghdad in 2005.¹⁸ Such operations involved five streams of activity: first, combat/kinetic; second, training local forces; third, providing essential services; fourth, promoting good governance; and fifth, the development of economic pluralism and long-term job opportunities (premised on market principles). Tying all five streams together were information operations designed to maximize their positive effect over the target audiences, most especially on fence-sitters (defined as the centre of gravity), as well as to prevent the enemy from manipulating the story of Coalition activities. Chiarelli and Michaelis could point to some localized achievements in reducing violence and meeting benchmarks in the five streams of activity, although it remained to be seen whether these could be translated into lasting operational-level success.

In the last analysis, however, the US would never quite pull together the right balance in the counter-insurgency (COIN) trinity of first, using the appropriate level of coercion to achieve security; second, winning the hearts and minds of

insurgent-hosting communities, especially the ‘fence-sitters’; and finally, forging a system of governance in accord with desired political objectives. Full spectrum operations were often dogged by contradictions, with good works regularly being unwound by too intense an effort to achieve control, an ostentatious warrior ethos, bureaucratic inertia, and an excessive concern with force protection. Chiarelli and Michaelis admitted that:

what we have not been able to do is create the systems and processes to execute the non-lethal side as effortlessly as combat operations. Our own regulations, bureaucratic processes, staff relationships, and culture complicate the ability of our soldiers and leaders to achieve synchronized non-lethal effects across the battle-space. Our traditional training model, still shuddering from the echo of our Cold War mentality, has infused our organization to think in only kinetic terms. This demands new modalities of thinking and a renewed sense of importance to the education of our officer corps.¹⁹

As early as autumn 2003, diffusely organized bands of Sunni insurgents, as well as criminal gangs, were achieving strategic effects that were crippling US policy. The analysis of some US commanders that the insurgents did not represent a strategic threat was firmly lodged in third-generation thinking. In fact, in failing to control the pacing of the insurgency and then the ultimate direction of the political process, the US faced an increasingly sub-optimal outcome. As early as November 2003, the Bush administration began to retreat from its desired political objectives, and in the course of 2004, accepted that the use of decisive force was impractical. In April 2004, for instance, US forces set out to destroy the Shia militia of the Mahdi Army and bring its errant leader, Muqtada al-Sadr, to justice for murder, but the complex politics of the situation meant that they ended up striking an accord: the Mahdi Army took a step back and gave up some of its weapons; US operations were eased off and al-Sadr escaped arrest. By 2005–2006, bargaining with some Sunni insurgents also quietly got underway, although this inevitably led to accusations of appeasement by some Shias.²⁰ As the Coalition conceded the decisive use of force and its political objectives, its forces would become third-party bystanders in someone else’s game.

Iraq provided many lessons. US forces rediscovered the old adage that COIN operations are largely political in nature. To become the master of the fourth-generation, it was clear that the military had to be properly integrated into a much broader portfolio of means. According to Hammes, joining up US war-making for the fourth-generation meant initiating a cultural and organizational revolution. He noted that:

Fourth-generation opponents are not invincible. They can be beaten, but only by coherent, patient actions that encompass all agencies of the government and elements of the private sector. Their warfare encompasses the fields of diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and economic and social development. American efforts must be organized as a network rather than in the traditional vertical bureaucracies of federal departments . . . This will require fundamental changes in how national security leadership trains, develops,

promotes, deploys, and employs personnel across the federal government. The current system, which is based on 19th century bureaucratic theory, cannot support 21st century operations.²¹

Hitherto, interfacing with the political, social, and cultural issues was not really the business of the first-, second-, or third-generation soldier. The fourth-generation soldier needed to tap into a far broader base of knowledge. Indeed, the idea that fourth-generation warfare came under the bracket of low intensity conflict was in danger of conveying the wrong impression. COIN operations were intense and all embracing; they could be seen as a form of total war.²²

The global war on terrorism and the war in Iraq have initiated a mood swing in military culture for the US armed forces. COIN is now in vogue within the system of officer education and US military journals are now full of think-pieces about 'full spectrum operations', the lessons of past COIN operations, and the importance of factoring in political and cultural issues. In an important article in the US Navy Institute's *Proceedings* in 2004, for instance, Major General John Scales (US Army, retired) argued that a 'cognitive and cultural transformation' of doctrine and training was required. Scales noted that:

we have spent billions to gain a few additional metres of precision, knots of speed, or bits of bandwidth. Some of that money might be better spent improving how our military thinks and studies, to create a parallel transformation based on cognition and cultural awareness. War is a thinking man's game. A military too acculturated to solving war fighting problems with technology alone should begin now to recognize that wars must be fought with intellect. Reflective senior officers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have concluded that great advantage can be achieved by out-thinking rather than out-equipping the enemy. They are telling us that wars are won as much by creating alliances, leveraging non-military advantages, reading intentions, building trust, converting opinions, and managing perceptions – all tasks that demand an exceptional ability to understand people, their culture, and their motivation. The military possessed the technological means in Iraq to conduct net-centric warfare with unparalleled proficiency. But it lacked the intellectual acumen, cultural awareness, and knowledge of the art of war to conduct culture-centric warfare. When the enemy adapts and finds ways to obviate the advantages of net-centric warfare, a focus on the art rather than the science of war becomes necessary to secure success. Sensors, computer power, and bandwidth count for little against a dispersed enemy who communicates by word of mouth and backally messengers and fights using simple weapons that do not require networks or sophisticated technological integration to be effective.²³

What the sort of thinking represented by Scales and others appeared to be pointing towards was the need to develop a new kind of 'effects-based mapping'. Specifically, the effects map needed to be expanded from its third-generation boundary, which went as far as the destruction and disabling of the enemy's armed forces, to a fourth-generation boundary, which extended to dissolving resistance and achieving

ultimate political outcomes. Of course, the problem with developing a strategy for the complex battlespace of the fourth-generation was that it included so many actors and factors that it was very difficult to map, much less implement effective tactical solutions. The kind of local knowledge and conceptual capacities required to do such things as pre-empt resistance, co-opt local people, reconcile local political and social disputes, and make political and economic reconstruction work better was difficult to marshal. Moreover, even if the right knowledge and personnel could be put in place by the military, turning theory into reality was a major barrier.²⁴ The incorporation of so many factors in campaign planning was liable to be overwhelming and could stymie effective decision-making. Commanders might balk at striking targets for fear of the negative consequences across the expanded effects-based map. Progress could be made to understand and act more systematically but the reality of the fourth-generation of warfare is that it might always be more art than science.

Today, mapping the zone of fourth-generation warfare and developing a doctrine to manage it more effectively is the principal task facing Western armed forces. Orchestrating ever more efficient destruction on the conventional battlefield is not the problem. Thus, if the principal formations of third-generation warfare were the armoured division and the fighter wing, the drivers of the fourth-generation lie in intelligence and information operations, shaping and precision strike, policing, and the Provincial Reconstruction Team or Commander's Emergency Response Program. US forces have undoubtedly made progress but the challenges may be such as to be beyond them. Moreover, the broader political context of the fourth-generation is not conducive to unilateral war-making. The reality of Iraq was that even with better initial planning and improved COIN techniques, it might have taken decades to dissolve resistance and put the right kind of political outcome in place. In the contemporary context, US forces simply could not hold on in Iraq for so long. It was never a realistic prospect in the first place. US-led interventions alone lacked one of the key foundations for persuading and persevering in fourth-generation warfare: that is, legitimacy.

The Potential of Multilateralized Intervention

In the light of US failures on the fourth-generation battlefield in Iraq, it is perhaps time to take stock of other approaches. In fact, in the course of the 1990s, United Nations-centred peacekeeping operations began to hold real promise as a model for managing complex conflicts in the post-Cold War context. While United Nations (UN) operations in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s did its reputation no good, developments which brought an end to the war in Bosnia in 1995 marked an important moment. This was when UN peacekeeping met US limited war strategy in the form of the persuasive bombing campaign. US military intervention in the Bosnian conflict in the autumn of 1995 was the necessary and sufficient condition for successful conflict management, but it could not be seen as a unilateral achievement.²⁵ In fact, it was the combination of US airpower and persuasive diplomacy networked to local allies on the ground, supported by robust

Anglo-French peacekeeping forces, and followed-up by a UN-orchestrated governance and reconstruction effort that really made for a successful formula. The neutrality and impartiality of traditional UN peacekeeping was superseded by a strategy of picking winners and deploying persuasive force, but the multilateral organization of the use of force and its follow-up meant the interveners retained some ability to co-opt combatants as well as endow the political process with relative legitimacy. It took 55 days of bombing, but the recalcitrant Bosnian Serbs were induced to give up their resistance and join a multilateralized peace process.

Extended multilateralized warfare was not a magic bullet, but something like it would see the US and other Western states through their interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and, in a slightly different form, Afghanistan in 2001. Much was still to be done in smoothing out the transition from limited war-fighting to peace support operations, to reconciliation and reconstruction, to ultimate political outcomes. The international community did not fully take on board the costs and commitment involved in seeing things through. Bosnia and Kosovo would remain UN/NATO protectorates for many years to come, for instance, as the UN tried to work out how to progress through the reconciliation and reconstruction phase: that is, how to finally get the gun out of politics; how to co-opt enemy camps into a viable political settlement; how to build-up the legitimacy and capacity of a new state; and how to deal with continuing resistance from inside and outside. Yet the combination of US high-tech war-making and new techniques in joined-up conflict management appeared to bring a step-change in the utility of military power in the post-Cold War world. Raising the level of legitimacy meant that burdens were shared, resistance reduced, and persuasiveness increased. The stability of the Western-led international system was also maintained because the interventions could be seen as post-modern in the sense that they appeared more about achieving collective international goods than the selfish national interests of particular powerful states.

An important point to make about the new multilateral intervention machine, though, was that the relationship between the US military, PSO forces, and the multilateralized follow-up emerged organically – coming together in a kind of undeclared symbiosis – and what had happened was rather poorly understood. A number of European militaries, notably the British Army, led the way in working up a doctrine for the role of the military in the multilateralized environment.²⁶ US armed forces were much slower to absorb the developments. Americans tended to recoil from assuming the role of international social worker and nation-builder, and there was deep resistance in the US government and Congress to putting US forces at the service of multilateral missions. Thus, the apparent increases in the utility of military power tended to be put down to advanced military technologies rather than their deployment within the context of new practices in conflict management. US forces continued to focus on the big third-generation game, with its peacekeeping and peace support capabilities remaining institutionally weak. US COIN and PSO forces remained ghettoized in special operations and civil-affairs units, and if solutions were needed to achieve ‘full spectrum dominance’, it was material, technological, or organizational ones that held the attention of most US policymakers and commanders.

Of course, when it came to Iraq, the multilateral intervention machine did not come together in time, and when it did splutter into life, it did so in a very problematic way. With the Bush administration unwilling to multilateralize the occupation, when the multilateral community did come to Iraq, it did so – whether it liked it or not – to support US war objectives rather than collective international ones. In this way, a kind of Mogadishu line was crossed as the multilateral community was identified as an instrument of the enemy by the insurgents, and the UN, Red Cross, and other non-governmental organizations came under systematic attack, almost to the extent that they were chased from the country. It was only as initial US objectives began to fall by the wayside that the wider international community assumed a more substantial role, but it was too little, too late. The window of opportunity for the multilateral community was probably lost – as it was for the US – in the first few months of the occupation. The solutions to mastering fourth-generation warfare are yet to be fully charted, but they do involve making multilateralized military action and its follow-up work better.

Conclusion

Bringing wars against diffusely organized insurgents to a successful conclusion has long been the Achilles' heel of great states, and this especially seems to be the case in the era of late 20th century globalization. Today, just when US military power has chased most opponents from the conventional battlefield, the new technologies and openness of globalization has empowered insurgents, especially 'glocal' ones. While the activities of some of these small actors might only be manifest on the territorial plane in rather diffuse and sporadic ways, they are able to operate across and draw upon a strategic space that is both regional and global in its extent. The advent of al-Qaeda demonstrated how significant the empowerment of small actors could be and provided a case par excellence of a fourth-generation insurgency. Meeting the challenge of such opponents requires predicting where their activities might precipitate; deterring, pre-empting and destroying the manifestations of that precipitation; and drying up their presence across the globalized strategic space. The task is a difficult one. Fourth-generation opponents are often so diffuse and well hidden that it is difficult to find and engage them. Indeed, it seems improbable that force alone is capable of achieving decisive outcomes against such adversaries. If only a proportion of the forces of fourth-generation opponents can be hunted down, many others will have to be persuaded to give up. The era of fourth-generation warfare is the era of the asymmetric bargaining war.

While Western states have powerful tools at their disposal in meeting the challenges of fourth-generation warfare, they also suffer from a number of limitations. Military operations are limited by existing domestic and international law, as well as by normative understandings that are integral to the continued existence of the liberal international order. In the context of the limited bargaining war, Western states are also constrained by their ability to engage in and persevere through what could be prolonged bargaining processes. It is often difficult either to accept or to admit openly that some fourth-generation opponents are legitimate bargaining

partners. Moreover, once Western troops are committed to the business of killing and dying, the clock is liable to start ticking. In the face of resistance and under the scrutiny of the globalized media, Western interventions are likely to be time-limited and conditioned by a race to get to the desired political outcomes before the costs of trying to get there become unacceptable.

In meeting the challenge of fourth-generation warfare, it is crucial to understand how military force fits into a broader portfolio of means designed to persuade and persevere as much as to destroy. Meeting that challenge requires a radical rethink of what war is – especially what the battlefield is – as well as the actors engaged. Devising effective strategies will also involve taking some unpalatable decisions. If fourth-generation war is principally a bargaining game, policymakers might have to adjust the language of ‘you are either with us or against us’ and the expectation of zero-sum victories; sub-optimal outcomes seem likely to be a fact of life in the fourth-generation. Western policymakers are faced with such dilemmas in the context of the global war on terrorism. If there is no realistic prospect of defeating contemporary Islamic militancy by force, the only alternative to an endless containment conflict may be to design a vast bargaining game: the use of force would be an element in the game but leveraging the diffuse organization of the Islamic militants and persuading many to give up would be the principal aim. The likes of Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi may be beyond the bargaining pale, but other bargaining partners may have to be found. Only in this way can the al-Qaeda-type phenomenon be marginalized, neutralized and, eventually, dissolved. With the US, so far, having failed to devise a convincing strategy for terminating the global war on terrorism, multilateralized interventions and bargaining might hold out the greatest promise for managing the post-Cold War low-intensity conflict and fourth-generation opponent. Only multilateralized strategies and interventions seem capable of sharing the burdens, transcending the globalized strategic space and providing the legitimacy required to persevere and persuade in the era of fourth-generation warfare.

NOTES

1. The development of warfare in the West since Napoleon embodied the three earlier generations. The first reflected the technology of the smoothbore musket: armies were massed to engage in linear and attritional battle. The second generation stemmed from 19th century developments in weapons and transport technologies: battle-lines were still linear but commanders could coordinate direct and indirect firepower as well as manoeuvre their forces across larger areas. The third generation was enabled by developments such as the tank, aircraft, and radio, but stemmed more from ideas than technology. The big ideas were combined arms and deep battle: this approach was non-linear and by striking deep into the enemy it sought to incapacitate rather than simply overwhelm. The focus of the operational art shifted from place to time, with the ability to raise one’s own tempo relative to that of the enemy the key factor. The German army inaugurated the third generation with its blitzkrieg, and the US Army brought it to its peak in the 1990s. See William S. Lind, Colonel Keith Nightengale, Capt. John F. Schmitt, Colonel Joseph W. Sutton, Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson, ‘The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth-Generation’, *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989, available at <http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/4th_gen_war_gazette.htm>.
2. Lind et al. observed that ‘fourth-generation warfare seems likely to be widely dispersed and largely undefined; the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. It will be non-linear, possibly to the point of having no 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 physical, entity . . . Success will depend heavily on effectiveness in joint operations as lines between responsibility and mission become very blurred. Again, all these elements are present in third generation warfare; fourth-generate will merely accentuate them'. Ibid., p.3.
3. Ibid., p.4.
 4. Ibid., pp.4–5.
 5. Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004); Edward N. Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.74, No.3 (May/June 1995); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in the Global Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2005).
 6. Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', p.114.
 7. William S. Lind, Major John F. Schmitt, and Colonel Gary I. Wilson, 'Fourth-Generation Warfare: Another Look', *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 1994, available at <http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/4GW_another_look.htm>.
 8. Thomas X. Hammes, 'Insurgency: Modern Warfare Evolves into a Fourth-Generation', *Strategic Forum*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Issue No. 214 (January 2005), available at <<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Strforum/SF214/SF214.pdf>>.
 9. Luttwak, 'Toward Post-Heroic Warfare', pp.109–122.
 10. Ibid., p.115.
 11. According to Avi Kober, 'Post-heroic warfare has two rules: first, one is not "allowed" to get killed. Second, one is not "allowed" to kill, at least not civilians. The first rule could be attributed to both demography and low stakes, whereas the second rule is affected by the belief that wars result from the evilness of the enemy's political leadership. If one sees the enemy as leadership, rather an armed forces or society – for example, if the enemy is Saddam, Milosevic, Aided or Arafat – then the centre of gravity should be the enemy's leadership, and killing large numbers of enemy soldiers (as one of the means to achieve battlefield decision), let alone civilians, is not a legitimate act'. Avi Kober, 'Does the Iraq War Reflect a Phase Change in Warfare?', *Defense and Security Analysis*, Vol.21, No.2 (June 2005), p.126.
 12. Such a limitation is a marked difference with previous COIN practice. Even the influential British model of COIN operations developed in the 1950s and 1960s, which stressed the rule of law and the use of minimum, targeted force, continued to embody a great deal of violence. In Malaya, many tens of thousands of civilians were forcibly transported into 'strategic hamlets'. In Kenya, many hundreds of Kikuyu tribesmen were hanged, and hundreds more killed (many beaten to death) in 're-education' camps. Even in the 1950s and 1960s, though, human-rights abuses were sometimes difficult to mask, and domestic political repercussions often interfered with practices in the field.
 13. For details of the US campaign in Fallujah, see *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 2005, especially the articles by Lieutenant General John F. Sattler and Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Daniel H. Wilson, 'Operation Al Fajr: The Battle of Fallujah – Part II', pp.12–25; Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Hayden, 'Counter-insurgency in Iraq Started with Fallujah', pp.28–9; F.J. West, 'The Fall of Fallujah', pp.52–8.
 14. See, Norwitz, Jeffrey H., 'Defining Success at Guantanamo: By what Measure?', *Military Review*, Vol.85, No.4 (July–August 2005), pp.81–2.
 15. In his capacity as Professor of Law at the US Naval War College and a Federal Special Agent of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Norwitz perceived that 'Success in the struggle against terrorism will be measured in generations. When future strategists look back on the early years of this decade, they will not judge Camp Delta on the relative value of intelligence reports but on humanitarian issues, how detainees were treated, the legitimacy of the trial process, whether laws reflected evolving definitions of "combatants", and how detainees were ultimately dealt with when America dismantled terrorist groups. As we discover what the law will not allow, serious action to define what is permissible will follow . . . It has been less than three years since the first detainee walked off the back of a military aircraft onto a runway baking under the hot Cuban sun. Is America achieving its strategic goals by its choice of means? Only by considering how the future measures success can America properly define its strategy at Guantanamo today'. Ibid., p.82.
 16. Jack Straw, 'Global Response to Terrorism', speech delivered at Royal United Services Institute, 16 January 2006, available at <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelebrate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029391647&a=KArticle&aid=1136904478281>>.
 17. See Colonel (ret.) Mark F. Cancian, 'A Civil War in the Military', *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, September 2006, pp.48–52.

18. Major General Peter W. Chiarelli (US Army) and Major Patrick R. Michaelis (US Army), 'Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full Spectrum Operations', *Military Review*, Vol.85, No.4 (July–August 2005). Chiarelli was US 1st Cavalry Division commander in Baghdad in 2004. For further discussion of full spectrum operations see Major General John R.R. Batiste (US Army) and Lieutenant Colonel Paul R. Daniels (US Army), 'The Fight for Samarra: Full Spectrum Operations in Modern Warfare', *Military Review*, Vol.85, No.3 (May–June 2005).
19. Chiarelli and Michaelis, 'Winning the Peace', p.15.
20. 'Negotiating with the Iraqi insurgency: dilemmas and doubts', *IISS Strategic Comments*, Vol.12, Issue 1 (Feb. 2006). Available at <<http://www.iiss.org/stratcom>>.
21. Hammes, 'Insurgency: Modern Warfare Evolves into a Fourth-Generation', p.7.
22. See Peter Maass, 'The Counter-insurgent', *The New York Times Magazine*, 11 January 2004.
23. Robert Scales, 'Culture-centric warfare', *Proceedings* (US Naval Institute), October 2004, p.33.
24. See Major John Nagl (US Army), 'Preface', *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
25. See Rupert Smith, 'Bosnia: Using Force Amongst the People', *The Utility of Force*, Chapter 9, especially pp.359-68.
26. Contemporary British peacekeeping doctrine was written in the context of war in Bosnia by Colonels Charles Dobbie and Philip Wilkinson at the Army Directorate-General of Doctrine and Development, Upavon, Wiltshire. A more robust peacekeeping approach – the Peace Support Operation (PSO) – emerged in the Army Field Manual, *Wider Peacekeeping* (JWP 3-01), in 1997. The current British doctrine booklet – *The Military Contribution to Peace Support Operations*, Joint Warfare Publication 3–50 (2nd Edition), Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre, Shrivenham, 2004 – remains the leading account of its kind. Contemporary British philosophy is also succinctly set out in *British Military Doctrine*, Joint Warfare Publication 0-01, 2001. JWP 0-01 opens with a concept of fighting power which is a model for the fourth-generation, asserting that, 'Fighting power can be applied benignly. However, it is an especially powerful and influential instrument of policy when it is used to deter or coerce during a measured process of conflict prevention and confrontation management. This includes the conduct of peace support operations, low intensity law enforcement and other operations aimed at securing humanitarian benefit. While many of these operations will be benign in nature, the effective management of confrontation will often depend on the ability to apply lethal force in a measured and deliberate fashion when necessary. At the very core of this ability is an attitude that is both flexible and endowed with humanity. The combination of war-fighting skills and humanity may seem paradoxical. However, a vitally important part of motivation is the belief in what one is doing: the measured application of force requires discipline and a finely tuned sense of moral purpose. The British approach to the development of fighting power has this vital quality at its core'. JWP 0-01, p.iii.