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Beyond the Traditional Battlefields: Understanding the New Dynamics of 21st Century

Warfare

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Abstract

This study explores the significant transformations that define warfare in the twenty-first century, analyzing the shift from conventional Clausewitzian principles to the intricacies of hybrid and generational warfare. Navigating through a variety of academic perspectives, the article addresses the impacts of political and economic forces on modern military strategies as well as the regression to positional warfare paradigms from the eighteenth century. This article offers a critical discourse of the First Gulf War as a turning point in the history of warfare that heralded the advent of precision-guided weaponry and information dominance. Moreover, it delves into the rise of non-traditional combat techniques such as protracted battles and proxy warfare, and the changing functions of non-state actors. The research underscores the Western military's adherence to conventional doctrines, while adversaries embrace more fluid and non-traditional strategies. The article emphasizes the theoretical components of these strategies and highlights the underlying complexity of contemporary conflicts in order to provide a thorough analysis of the implementation of fourth and fifth-generation warfare as well as the idea of hybrid warfare in the context of Pakistan.

Keywords: Traditional battlefields, 21st century warfare, fifth-generation war, hybrid warfare

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Introduction

As the war enters into a supposedly post-modern age, academic discourse focuses on the multiplicity of changes affecting not only the different aspects of modern warfare but pay attention to its character which they claim is undergoing a radical shift. Some refer to these modern shifts in the character of war as revolutionary changes within the international system, while Sidharth Kaushal claims they are the product of a regression to the positional warfare paradigm of the eighteenth century (Kaushal, 2018). These categories take a swipe at Clausewitzian theory, often attributing equally profound changes in the character and conduct of war to political and economic forces reshaping international relations.

The end of the Cold War has also made ambiguous the erstwhile clearly demarcated boundaries of the East-West standoff. One of the key components of contemporary global politics is the processes of globalization that are propelled by liberal and Western economic ideals. Economic interdependence and abhorrence towards the horrors of war reflected in the Revolution in Attitudes towards the Military (RAM) (Kurth, 2004) have made war obsolete at least among major states. For scholars like Michael Mandelbaum the trend towards obsolescence was the result of ‘the rising costs of war and the diminishing expectations of victory’s benefits’ (Mandelbaum, 1998). Notwithstanding the inherent limits of these arguments, the current state of terminal decline has given rise to assertions that the 21st-century war is undergoing significant transformations. It has been argued that modern conflict, when it takes place will fundamentally differ from earlier strategic history in terms of its structure, tactics, and motivations; it is no longer merely a political and rational tool, or, in Carl von Clausewitz’s words, ‘the continuation of policy.’ However, cultural and technological transformations appear to be influencing the salience of what is now referred to as the ‘new war.’

The primary credit for this new, emerging form of warfare goes to researchers and experts like Herfried Münkler (2005), Martin Van Creveld (2009), Mary Kaldor (2013), and William S. Lind (2001). Hence, for Van Creveld (1997, 2001), Holsti (1996), and Duffield (2014), who believe low-intensity warfare is the wave of the future, the ‘non-trinitarian’ wars fought by a variety of irregulars and insurgents in conflicts marked by religious fundamentalism

and ethnic differences, rather than ‘trinitarian’ wars fought between states define the security environment of the twenty-first century. Van Creveld anticipates that war would likely cease to be a rational political pursuit and instead become an irrational, chaotic endeavor waged not by armies but by factions with disparate agendas (Van Creveld, 2009: 69). Modern warfare will become irrational due to the absence of the rational components of the Clausewitzian Trinity, namely the military and the government, as well as the fact that these wars are distinguished by sheer brutality and a dearth of strategic planning and restraint. Robert Kaplan in *The Coming Anarchy* cautions that ‘something far more terrible awaits us’ where ‘high-tech weapons’ would be a useless word and conventional war devoid of any battles will present civilians as primary targets (Kaplan, 2002: 44). Remarking on the nature of contemporary warfare, Rupert Smith highlights a new paradigm that can explain ‘war amongst the people’ and draws on his operational experience with the British Army in the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Northern Islands (Smith, 2005: 1-26). He asserts, ‘War no longer exists. Confrontation, conflict and combat undoubtedly exist all around the world.... Nonetheless, war cognitively known to most non-combatants, war as a battle in a field between men and machinery, war as a massive deciding event in a dispute in international affairs: such war no longer exists’(ibid: 1).

The First Gulf War of the 1990s deserves a special place in this discussion of the change in trends of 21st-century warfare. It is frequently regarded as a turning point between industrial warfare, which prioritizes mechanized combat and the massive destruction of the enemy's war-making resources, and post-industrial or post-modern warfare, which deploys precision-guided weaponry, causes minimal collateral damage, and profoundly improved means of real-time information gathering, surveillance, and target acquisition. Currently, a senior fellow at the United Services Institution of India, Vinod Anand highlights aspects of new technologies used in the Gulf War that, while trying to make the battlefield opaque for the enemy, have made it more transparent with advanced technological and human intelligence systems. However, this era of information warfare has also brought about a massive force multiplier impact that may not be completely quantified, particularly in the areas of intelligence, surprise and deception, decision-making, and the psychological degradation of adversaries. Nevertheless, it is bringing the globe

closer to the idea of 'information systems dominating' and placing a greater emphasis on the knowledge and artificial intelligence built into weapons and surveillance technology to achieve military goals (Anand, 1999).

Others, like Shay Shabtai, term them "extended conflicts," which are marked by a strategy of attrition in which all available domestic and foreign resources are gathered in an effort to transform the adversary and bring about a resolution. In this type of confrontation, the use of military force is minimal (Shabtai, 2016: 312). The concept basically defines a trend away from both the 'industrial wars' of the last 60 years and the 'asymmetric warfare' of the last half a century. In '*asymmetric warfare*', there is an attempt by the less developed and disadvantaged opponents to turn the conventional military superiority of the advanced industrial nations irrelevant and take advantage of their sensitivity to casualties and self-imposed moral constraints in the conduct of war. On the other hand, in an asymmetric struggle, both sides partake in a close-quarters battle and quickly adjust. But in these "new" "extended conflicts," the weaker side would have the advantage of employing the most advanced and lethal tools and strategies. These will range from the use of accurate weaponry (such as anti-tank guided missiles), interference with the stronger side's space capabilities (such as GPS communication satellites), cyberattacks, terror-induced attrition, the employment of unconventional weapons, and even the use of international bodies like the UN to cast doubt on the stronger side's right to wage war (ibid: 315). There will not be "instant solutions" to these kinds of wars since changing the enemy's policies will need protracted internal procedures that may be impacted by outside forces rather than outside interference (ibid: 318).

However, some researchers are focusing more on nuanced features of how warfare is evolving rather than the fading dynamics of the Cold War. Experts such as Andreas Krieg and Jean-Marc Rickli (2018) analyze the socio-political perspective and propose that the dominant form of war in the twenty-first century is 'surrogate warfare.' According to Thomas Huber (2002: 1-10), fighting a war by surrogate is a concept that lies at the convergence of debates about 'proxy warfare' and 'compound' warfare. It goes beyond the limits of the strategic debate on these concepts because in the information and automation age, the externalization of the burden

of warfare—that is, the means to externalize, in part or in full, the strategic, operational, and tactical burden—for taxpayers, policymakers, and the military has become far more diverse and has evolved into a conceptual umbrella for both supplementary and substitutionary forces and platforms. Both technical and human platforms can serve as surrogates. In the first scenario, these may be mercenaries, transnational movements, insurgent groups, terrorist organizations, or private military or security firms. Conversely, in the second scenario, they may be an unmanned air power or space power weapon, allowing the patron to wage war in a way that is significantly more economical, clandestine, and effective than what would be anticipated from a normal infantry unit (Krieg&Rickli, 2018: 115). Surrogate warfare appears to be the norm rather than the exception in the state's management of violence recently as a result of the space it has created to dissociate itself from organized violence perpetrated by surrogates³ under its direction and escape the political consequences of the conflict. Thus, the proponents of the concept believe that the motivations to externalize the burden of warfare will remain complex in the globalized, privatized, securitized, and mediatized security environment of the twenty-first century.

The recurrent subject in Western literature regarding the progression of modern warfare doctrine and tactics highlights how their forces are constrained by Napoleonic dogmas and the laws and regulations of theological philosophy from the thirteenth century. However the prospective adversaries of the West reconceptualized warfare, and they are unconstrained by the boundaries the West imposes on them. The West continues to understand peace and war as existing at opposite extremities of the conflict spectrum, demarcated by declarations of intent and triumph. However, the words 'hybrid' and 'ambiguous' warfare have recently become commonplace due to their fixation on the Russian 'Gerasimov doctrine.' Since 2001, their foes have observed them, taken note of their tactics, and expanded their battlespace to include more than just combatants and contested areas. Russia has adapted. They have learned from the West's obsession with information and network-enabled combat, but they don't view them as merely communication media. They continue to employ highly flexible tactics and strategies that thrive

³The only connection the surrogate maintains with the patron is through the body that either funds, trains, or directs it or him.

in chaos and exploit fleeting opportunities. China continues to be the creator of "protracted warfare," employing a generational approach to accomplish its goals. It is relevant to modern warfare just as it has been to insurgencies (Roberts, 2017).

The National Military Strategy of the United States (2015) presents the following gradation of military conflicts (Figure 1). As reflected from the continuum of conflict, there is a shift away from state-to-state conflicts towards hybrid and non-state conflicts. The Clausewitzian "trinity" of the people, the army, and the state have clearly changed with the emergence of non-state actors, and the prevalent conventional model of attritional warfare has been put to the challenge. However, the spectrum of probable conflicts is still not devoid of scenarios ranging from high-intensity conflicts to regional hybrid wars to

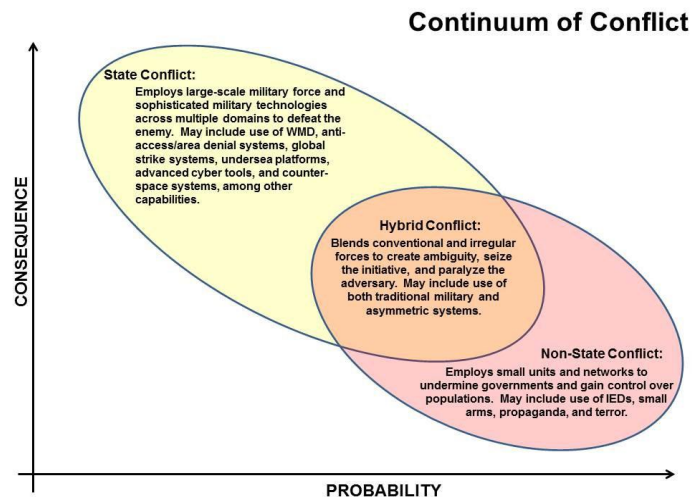


Figure 1: Continuum of Conflict

interactions in cyberspace domains that blur peace and conflict distinctions. Besides what the world is witnessing in the twenty-first-century war is not a radical alteration in its character but a series of political and technological shifts marked by the reassertion of constraints on the conduct of war and domestic constraints in the mobilization of national resources, whose cumulative effect has been a resurgence of strategies like limited war and by extension, 'limited aims strategies'. Ethnic enclaves and ungoverned and contested territories within nation-states are all political focal points of modern war that lend themselves to a limited aims strategy.

The list of catchphrases, political buzzwords, creative acronyms, etc. is long and contains terminologies like 'low intensity conflicts', 'new wars', 'fourth generation warfare', 'counterinsurgency', 'counterterrorism', 'foreign internal defence', 'fifth generation warfare', 'unrestricted warfare' and 'asymmetric warfare' without subjecting many to rigorous scholarly scrutiny and gradually some of them been discarded too. This book however is interested in the

analysis of the 21st century warfare from the perspective of ‘generations of war’ and the concept ‘hybrid warfare’ recently in vogue in the practical and scholarly community. The implication of the use of fourth and fifth generations of warfare in conjunction with ‘hybrid war’ - which is more of a hybrid concept as it combines aspects of an analytical and doctrinal concept - has serious repercussions for countries like Pakistan. The concept up till now has not been subjected to thorough study. Hybrid war is being waged against Pakistan in political, economic, military, informational and social domains. It is important to first equip ourselves with the theoretical dimensions of these concepts before applying them to a particular Pakistani scenario. The chapter will be divided into three sections. Section one will discuss generations of warfare and their evolution into fourth and fifth generations. The next section will discuss hybrid warfare and how it is different from conventional regular and irregular warfare in practice for centuries. The last section will discuss hybrid warfare in contemporary practice.

Generations of Warfare

The primitive wars of the tribal societies with their bows and arrows have progressed to warfare between agrarian societies and further, to industrialized societies with emphasis on scientific and technological advances- rifles, guns, tanks, aircraft, missiles, etc. Not only did the Industrial Revolution and subsequent technical advancements change behavior, but they also changed the character and structure of warfare. The scale of military operations was substantially widened by the mass production of weaponry and the formation of armies that were loyal to the modern nation-states. However, the fundamental objective of the wars remained to be the annihilation of the enemies on the battlefield. Since the advent of the digital era, warfare has become more network-centric rather than platform-centric, with more precision weaponry and highly automated command and control systems maintaining the battlefield's "system of systems" dominance. But yet another 'generation of warfare' – call it 'Fifth-Generation Warfare' - has arrived that offers a far more complex future warfare scenario that had hitherto captured the attention of scholars. As stated before, the implications of the relevance of this latest form of warfare for countries like Pakistan are troubling and dangerous. Before dwelling on this (which is also the central theme of the paper), it is important to get oneself familiar with the generations of warfare and the subsequent concept of 'hybrid warfare'.

First Three Generations of Warfare

What today we acknowledge as the first three generations of warfare (Lind, 2001), are the product of a 'dialectically qualitative' course of action in an otherwise continuous evolutionary process of modern military development. The first generation of warfare developed not only as a result of innovations including gunpowder, cannon, and muskets but also as political, economic, and social dynamics as Europe moved from a feudal to a monarchical state system. Thus, the rise of nation-states following 1648 ushered in the modern era of warfare and its initial generation of warfare, typified by the use of smoothbore muskets, line and column tactics, and mass manpower at the center of action. This warfare was partly shaped by the social and intellectual conditions of that time in history. The central objective of the first generation of warfare remained the direct

annihilation of the opposing army through the application of close military force against its center of gravity.

The second generation of war was also not just the outcome of improvements in weaponry but required changes across other domains too. Major population swell as well as the increased ability of the state to levy and collect taxes significantly enhanced government control over the masses. Massive industrial output was required to produce weapons and huge quantities of ammunition. Improvements in the transportation system especially extensive rail systems facilitated the movement of the armies and their supplies. All these factors contributed to the domination of firepower in the World War I battlefield. Tactics remained essentially linear based on fire and movement and developed as a response to breechloaders, rifled muskets, barbed wire, machineguns, and the indirect fire capabilities of the artillery. In a nutshell, 2GW was all about the replacement of ‘massed manpower’ with ‘massed firepower’ and technology was the principal driver of change in second-generation tactics. The warfare domain essentially remained single-dimensional in the first and second generations and was conducted primarily on the water’s surface. Learning from the costly wars of the first generation in terms of human loss, practitioners of the second generation were forced to adapt to fighting from the cover of trenches rather than in massed formations in the open. The very first manifestation of the arrival of the second generation of warfare was the American Civil War where the strategy and tactics employed were not very different from those of the Verdun battlefields of World War I, fought almost 50 years later.

The progress of the generations of warfare had been logical. Each generation aimed to reach deeper into the enemy’s rear and none came from a sudden transformation. Like the previous two generations, the third generation of warfare took advantage of the prevailing political climate and economic conditions. ‘Only the Germans had the political will, intellectual honesty and strategic imperative to build a complete combined arms team to execute the tactics they had developed in World War I’ (Hammes, 2005a). Thus they shocked the world with Blitzkrieg in 1939 and ushered in the era of 3GW. The new generation was a response to the increased battlefield firepower and based on maneuver rather than attrition. Rather than seeking

to close with and destroy the adversary, 3GW attacks relied on infiltration or penetration to destroy the enemy's combat forces in a nonlinear manoeuvre. Tanks brought a qualitative shift in the operational art of World War II. During Blitzkrieg the basis of the operation art shifted from place to time. Thus third generation of warfare is characterized by combined arms operations in land, sea, air, and cyber domains. It still remains the dominant form of conventional military combat between modern nation-states.

Fourth-Generation War (4GW)

Lind et al. are credited with identifying how warfare was actually changing from 'manoeuvre warfare'. They argued like previous generations, 4GW was as much the product of contemporary forces, especially technology and ideas but later definition linked it with evolution and in conjunction with political, economic, social and technological changes of the era. Unlike the first three generations of warfare that led to the development of mass armies with even more firepower and mobility, 4GW would be more dissipated – the battlefield was to include the whole of the enemy's society. Rather than massing to attack the army from outside, it focuses more on undermining it from within through 'psychological operations [that] may become the dominant operational and strategic weapon in the form of media/information intervention' (Lind, 2001). However, Lind et.al perceived four elements of the previous generations to persist in fact expand in 4GW. The first is mission orders but this warfare is marked by dispersion so the lowest levels were expected to operate flexibly on the basis of the commander's intent. Second is the decreased dependence on centralized logistics. Third is more emphasis on maneuver as massing of men or firepower may become a disadvantage as it will be an easy target. And the last is collapsing the enemy internally rather than directly confronting it on the battlefield (Lind, 2001).

Thomas Hammes, a US Marine Corps officer, took forward the idea of Lind et al. and successfully established the main characteristics of 4GW. To him, 4GW uses all available networks whether military, political, social, and economic to 'convince the enemy's political decision-makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. It is rooted in the fundamental percept that superior political will, when properly

employed, can defeat greater economic and military power.’ Rather than aiming for the direct defeat of the armed forces of the adversary, it attacks the enemy’s political will through a combination of guerrilla tactics or civil disobedience ‘with the soft networks of social, cultural and economic ties, disinformation campaigns and innovative political activity’ (Hammes, 2005a: 190). Thus, a shift from the destruction of the enemy’s armed forces of industrial age warfare to the information age 4GW with a focus on the enemy’s political decision-makers has taken place.

Hammes explains how 4GW spans the spectrum of human activity. In the political domain, it utilizes national, sub-national and transnational networks and organizations to convey messages to the target audience. Strategically, the aim is to hit the political will of the enemy’s decision-makers and their people while simultaneously uplifting the morale of its own supporters. Operationally, actions carried out by the 4GW practitioners involve high-impact direct military attacks to indirect economic attacks. Tactically, 4GW avoids direct confrontation and prefers maximum impact by seeking materials readily available in society. And lastly, 4GW are protracted wars - for decades rather than for months or years (ibid: 190). The employment of these techniques has resulted in three losses to American forces in the previous century – Vietnam, Lebanon and Somalia. It has simultaneously brought humiliation and defeat for the French in Vietnam and Algeria, and the USSR in Afghanistan.

Thus, the essence of 4GW is nonlinearity and can be summed up as blurring of boundaries – between war and peace, between combatants and non-combatants, between tactics and strategy, and between order and chaos. In short, it is impossible to contain such war in either time or space. Here 4GW merges with the concept of ‘Low Intensity Conflicts (LIC)’ which dominated the scholarship in the 1990s and in which bands of criminals, insurgents, warlords and terrorists were the problem. This understanding would be central to any understanding of fourth-generation war too. What makes these insurgents new in the 4GW contest is the way they operate simultaneously in local and global realms - ‘glocal insurgent’ as Simon Murden(2007: 198) calls them - empowered by new technologies and process of globalization of the late 20th century.

Hammescites Mao Tse-tung as the first practitioner to write about as well as successfully executing 4GW. Mao was the first to envision political power as key to the success of insurgency. Hammes believes the concept was then modified by the North Vietnamese whose main target was the political will of the enemy in its home base, refined by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua by focusing on the political developments driving the outcome on the battlefield and then by the first intifada which remained successful by undermining the international legitimacy of the Israeli occupation. Hence, movements seeking social and political change employ 4GW tactics to achieve their objectives as areas involving insurgency rarely return to strategic status quo but rather end with major changes in the social, economic and political structure of the territories involved. 4GW are always about changing the internal status quo from the inside rather than by the external intervention, by managing the persuasion of various audiences (the supporters, the undecided, the enemy public opinion, the global, regional and local levels) to target enemy decision-makers. The ability to persevere becomes vital in such low-intensity attrition and any large-scale kinetic operations are likely to have knock-on effects that would be unpredictable and difficult to contain. Those who wage 4GW are not invincible but can only be beaten by patient, coherent actions that encompass all agencies of governments and elements of the private sector (Hammes, 2005b: 7). However, the fourth-generational soldier needs to interface the political, social and cultural issues hitherto not the concern of the first three generations of warfare and to tap into a far broader base of knowledge. Because of the involvement of so many actors and factors, it is very challenging to turn theory into reality even if the kind of local knowledge and conceptual capacities like pre-empting resistance, co-opting local people, reconciling local political and social disputes, and making political and economic reconstruction work better can be marshaled (Murden, 2007: 205-06). Bringing an end to insurgency in 4GW is principally a bargaining game where the use of force could be an element in the game but sub-optimal outcomes seem to be a fact of life.

What makes these 4GW insurgents so potent is their ability to use ‘communications’ in the broadest sense as the pivot to stage their activities and allow them to fully exploit inherent asymmetries of the communication world of the modern era. Terrorism is particularly an

important tool in their hands as it directly shapes public perception, and their trust and confidence in government. By employing the liberating power of communication technology and media forums like social media, the ruling elites are rendered largely irrelevant as they are unable to filter information for their public and control narratives. Insurgents take away the advantage of opinion formation of the masses, hitherto an important element in the state's control in previous generations, as anyone can potentially influence and communicate with anyone. Media which can largely affect 'tone and quality of decision-making' creates 'immense pressure on politicians.....to make hasty and often ill-considered decisions' (Spence, 2007: 45-46).

4GW theory is not without criticism. Perhaps the best critique was written by Kenneth F. McKenzie in 1993, whose memorable phrase 'elegant irrelevance' described 4GW and criticized how proponents of 4GW omitted important areas of military history from analysis (McKenzie Jr, 1993). Hammes's central tenet premised on the linear progression of warfare into distinct stages of massed manpower (first-generation warfare), massed firepower (2GW), maneuver operations (3GW) and into low-intensity conflict (4GW) cannot be sustained after reading the works of Colin S. Gray (1999, 2004), Geoffrey Parker (1988), Jeremy Black (2000) and MacGregor Knox & Williamson Murray (2001). Developments of warfare defy neat categorization; they have been parallel or uneven in character and history negates drawing of strict lines between fire and maneuver or even between combined arms warfare. Hammes also draws little from the huge literature available on insurgency (Beckett, 2001; Elliot-Bateman, 1970; Harkavy & Neuman, 2001; Laqueur, 1977; Osanka & Huntington, 1963) and erroneously assumes insurgency to date only 70 years old with Mao Tse-tung as its principal architect. Besides he overlooks that both Mao and Vo Nguyen ultimately won wars by resorting from irregular to regular military tactics through the doctrine of protracted warfare and secondly his 4GW theory fails to register how the shift to ethno-political conflict and wars of cultural identities are replacing Cold War era of revolutionary wars (Harkavy & Neuman, 2001: Chap 5; Kaldor, 2013; Kober, 2002). Aside from valid criticism, Hammes 4GW which is an evolved form of insurgency warfare is still being waged in different parts of the world by groups desiring radical changes in the internal status

quo. Insurgency warfare is a thousand-year-old tactic used by the weak against the stronger party and in the words of David Sorenson: ‘the best way to prepare for insurgency is to avoid the mistakes upon which it feeds’ (Sorenson, 2005).

Table 1: The Manner in which Generations of Warfare Evolved

Generations of Warfare	The Manner in which it Evolved
First Generation Warfare	It preceded the Industrial Age
Second Generation Warfare	They were the product of the changes that occurred in the Industrial Age
Third Generation Warfare	
Fourth Generation Warfare	It spans transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age
Fifth Generation Warfare	It is the outcome of changes that are occurring in the Information Age

Fifth- Generation War (5GW)

The contemporary international security system with a split in traditional twentieth-century state-centric paradigm and new twenty-first-century sub-state and trans-state strata has created complex and overlapping modes of armed conflict. They range from *post-modern* or RMA aerial precision strike warfare to *modern* or conventional (high-intensity), symmetrical warfare, and *pre-modern* or unconventional (low-intensity), irregular warfare. What has been termed as fifth-generation warfare signifies the beginning of the post-modern era with strategies that exploit the weaknesses of the enemies by employing asymmetrical methods (Reed, 2008: 684-722). It is generally agreed that the 9/11 terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda have ushered in 5GW though there is widespread disagreement among its authors as per its definition as well as whether it has emerged.

Donald Reed (2008) makes the most systematic analysis of the concept of 5GW by highlighting changes in four essential elements of war – the new domains of conflict, the changing nature of adversaries, the changing nature of objectives, and the changing nature of force. According to Reed, the domains of the conflict in the 5GW have expanded to include physical (land, air, sea), information (including cyber), cognitive, and social (including political) domains thus extending beyond the three-dimensional (land, air, sea) battlefield and the political

domain of 4GW. The nature of adversaries is likewise undergoing change, becoming omnipresent and empowering any self-interested entity with economic and technical means to go to war. Beyond the monopoly of the nation-states and insurgencies, war in the era of the globalized Information Age has become a domain of supra-combinations where state and non-state entities in the form of networks, super-powered individuals, and groups can wage warlike destruction. This is beyond the 4GW domain where low-intensity conflicts were either the guerilla or police actions occurring in less developed regions of the world, with the absence of non-regular armies on either side and marked by the absence of high technology weapons of the modern armies. Similarly, 5GW has brought a change in the nature of objectives too. From 3GW's objective of attrition of resources and the indirect destruction of the adversary with firepower, 4GW becomes attrition of will i.e. attacking the opponent's political and public will to fight. 5GW practitioners remain resilient against the defeat mechanism of attrition of will or resources but are not vulnerable to the use of implosion or the inward collapse of their organizations due to inertia. In 5GW 'the attack against a networked opponent's sub-processes can be by any means, military or non-military, lethal or non-lethal until over time the opponent's efforts are rendered irrelevant to the point that he becomes vulnerable to an implosion from inertia' (ibid: 695). Lastly, the character and nature of force which remained fairly consistent in the first three generations of warfare by the application of kinetic force against the centers of gravity (CoG) of enemy forces on a physical battlefield underwent significant change in 4GW. By removing CoG from the physical battlefield and making it political rather than military, 4GW practitioners proved the dialectical advantage of kinetic force (military power) can be defeated by the successful application of non-kinetic force (political force). Things become even more complex in the 5GW as the physical battlefield is dissipated to a point (because of networked supra-combinations) where they become either non-recognizable or give the appearance of being non-existence. By the application of kinetic or non-kinetic, military or non-military, lethal or non-lethal force, the concept of force in 5GW is exponentially expanded to an extent where the enemy is compelled to accede to one's will and thus can defeat a much more potent military force.

Thus the first four generations symbolize modern era warfare while the fifth generation warfare marks the beginning of the post-modern era warfare that is moving away from principles of modern conventional (between warring nation-states) trinitarian wars (between the trinity of state's government, army, people) to non-trinitarian war between state and non-state entities organized as networks or supra-combinations. Rather the characteristics of war without national boundaries are blurring to an extent between government and people, public and private, combatants and non-combatants, war and crime, and civil and military that it resembles more the pre-modern era or prior to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. 5GW has achieved dialectical advantage and its practitioners can defeat any of the earlier generations using non-kinetic force without even giving the impression of being in combat.

The characteristics of 5GW conform to the definition of '*unrestricted warfare*' given by Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsu that involves 'using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel an enemy to accept one's interests.' They further add the 'first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden' (Qiao & Wang, 2002: x).

The practitioners of 5GW have three distinct advantages over previous generations:

- *The potential to achieve supra-combinations*: The aim of the combination of combinations is to render a conventional war win (tactical wins in the physical battlefield) irrelevant by strategic loss to an enemy not restricted to any single domain of conflict, objective or type of force.
- *The blurring of traditional restricted warfare boundaries*: This means anything that has been developed for the benefit of mankind can be used as a weapon in 5GW like the internet and commercial planes used to carry out the 9/11 attacks. Similarly in 5GW stock markets, research laboratories, media outlets, banks and financial centers, religious centers, schools, markets, parks, hotels and internet domain servers are no less battlefields as the killing fields of Afghanistan or Iraq. Such blurring affects the essence of both war and its outcome i.e. the defeat of the enemy. Besides it also overlooks the internationally recognized rules of morality that hitherto accompanied modern war and

confined it within a restricted framework. Therefore, there is no restriction on combatants, on the selection of targets or on the conduct of indiscriminate attacks against civilians and the unarmed.

Supra-Domain Combinations	Physical + Information + Cognitive + Social domains New forms of warfare beyond conventional combat possible, e.g. financial warfare, environmental warfare, media fabrication warfare, science and technology warfare, psychological warfare, religious warfare, cultural warfare or any combination thereof
Supra-Adversary Combinations	State/Non-State + Transnational + Network + Super-Empowered Individuals and groups Adversaries held together by common interests rather than geographical, nationalistic or ideological boundaries
Supra-Objective Combinations	Policy + Strategic + Operational + Tactical Objective may or may not entail defeat of opponent in traditional sense but can have effect on opponent at any other level without regard to time and space
Supra-Force Combinations	Kinetic/Non-Kinetic + Armed/Non-Armed Force + Military/Non-Military + Lethal/Non-Lethal Means Kinetic force being military, Non-kinetic force may combine any of political, economic, social, cultural, media fabrication, information control, technological, resource denial, legal, psychological, religious aor any other measures to defeat opponent

- *Limited role of modern combined arms mechanized militaries in future conflicts:* This means that modern combined arms or mechanized militaries are relegated to a more limited role rather than eliminating them altogether. The asymmetrical wars of today are difficult to win today even by the vastly economically and militarily powerful nation-states as shown by recent examples of Afghanistan and Iraq. The role of militaries would

⁴ See Reed, 2008: 698-99.

be limited because their ‘dissimilar’ opponents would be capable of fighting 5GW, unrestricted by rules and restraints of the post-modern era of war e.g computer hacks, 2001 anthrax and 2002-03 Ricin attacks on Capitol Hill, or even 2004 Madrid bombings may all be early examples of fifth-generation warfare (Hammes, 2004: 290).

Any nation that aims to fight the 5GW enemy has to acknowledge the significant limitations that this new generation of warfare is imposing on nation-states. The terminal decline in the state is accompanied by a similar downward trend in the significance of modern militaries. The unrestricted framework of 5GW has to be embraced by taking into account a long strategic view of security. Elements of national power have to be transformed to achieve combinations beyond limits as focusing solely on the military dimension is a certain path to a strategic failure in today’s post-modern war. The weak surely can defeat the strong through ruthless ‘unrestricted warfare’ and this is what they are practicing in the complex contemporary security environment.

Conclusion

The analysis of warfare in the twenty-first century unveils a multifaceted and intricate terrain that transcends conventional military doctrines. The study indicates that modern warfare involves a wide range of actors, strategies, and technologies and is no longer limited to state actors and conventional battlefields. A reaction to the shifting geopolitical, technological, and social landscapes can be witnessed in the shift from classic Clausewitzian warfare to hybrid and generational battles. It is clear that the First Gulf War was a turning point in the development of information-centric, highly technology-driven warfare. The emergence of non-state actors and the adoption of surrogate warfare strategies show how the distinctions between war and peace are becoming increasingly hazy, posing a challenge to traditional military strategies. The research's emphasis on Pakistan's hybrid warfare experience draws attention to the applicability of these theoretical perspectives and underscores the need for a thorough understanding of the dynamic nature of modern combat. The findings of this study highlight the need for military strategists and policymakers to adjust to the changing landscape of modern warfare, where innovation, adaptability, and a thorough grasp of unconventional combat elements are critical to successful conflict management.

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