The Fifth Generation of Warfare: An End to Guerrilla Conflicts?

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Abstract:

Over the course of human history, civilized nations have sought to discover and devise new ways to conduct themselves during warfare. As the centuries passed and new ground-breaking developments swept the field, so too did new tactics and strategies define new elements of warfare. The emergence of gunpowder warfare as the predominant form of armed conflict began a series of stages in military theory known as the generations of warfare. These four generations have, over the last five centuries, changed and altered the scale by which humanity participates in war. The most recent of these generations, the fourth generation, has given way to the rise of non-state actors, or organizations without any legal sovereignty. The rise of these actors, facilitated by the benevolence of powerful states, has led to uncontrollable and chaotic forms of warfare rising to predominance around the world and displacing the position of the state as the sole armed actor in international conflict or otherwise. In order for this trend to be reversed, and the power of non-state actors to be nullified once more, sovereign states must take steps to ensure that the future of warfare, the fifth generation, is one that re-establishes the supremacy of the state as the sole legitimate actor in international affairs. Only through this can states begin to define the terms by which civilized conflict may be conducted and spurn the rise of non-state actors. This entire process must be done through the development of a new generation of warfare focused on both technological and theoretical innovations, spearheaded by the great states of the world and focused entirely on the countering of non-state actors and unconventional tactics of warfare. This will require both the application of new tactics and strategies against non-state actors as well as a steady introduction of effective tactics into the common military discourse. Once states master unconventional warfare, only then will they have the ability to counter and destroy it. While this by no means end war, it will ensure that all future conflict is conducted in a more civilized and humane manner that respects international law and conventions.
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Introduction:

For centuries, states have undergone changes that have led to the development of new methods and ways of conducting themselves in warfare. These changes have resulted in a chronological progression of warfare over time that can be traced and analyzed over the last several centuries. From the humble harquebus to the modern battle rifle, states have experimented with new tactics and strategies in order to win conflicts amongst themselves. Recently, the rise of non-state actors for the first time in modern history has broken the monopoly of the state’s use of force and given rise to a new form of warfare wildly different than anything seen in the last millennium: unconventional warfare.

The Significance of Guerrilla Warfare

For the past three centuries, guerrilla wars, as they are commonly known, have come to have had a significant impact on the outcomes of wars and numerous armed conflicts. In the last half-century alone, guerrilla wars have come to such prominence that they have replaced conventional war as the dominant form of conflict in the world today. This dominance is so great and overwhelming that sovereign states have failed to find effective counters to unconventional warfare. Time and time again, well-trained and equipped conventional forces were wholly defeated by nothing more than committed men with rifles and improvised bombs. This failure to achieve victory stands as a testament not to the incompetence of the conventional forces of the state, but rather to the brilliance and cunning of the unconventional non-state actor.

To win an engagement against a larger, better equipped, well-funded foe is no easy thing, and doing so with minimal losses makes the feat all the more impressive. But despite the genius with which non-state actors fight many guerrilla wars, there has been an undeniable imbalance created within the realm of warfare and conflict. Conventional forces, for all their might, are still forced to obey what are known as the “rules of war,” which can
broadly be defined as the rules by which western liberal democracies agree to engage in conflict. These rules are what separate the actions and tactics of non-state actors from what can be called “civilized warfare.”

These rules, which include standards for the treatment of prisoners of war, treatment of civilians, organizational hierarchies, standardized uniforms, and codes of conduct when engaging enemy forces, are what grant the forces of the state legitimacy in their fight against unconventional forces. Sovereign states and their forces must abide by these rules or risk being delegitimized as a state and losing their sovereignty, which gives them standing within the international community and just cause for engaging any guerrilla forces within their borders.

When it comes to warfare, sovereign states must maintain their monopoly on the use of force or risk being relegated to the realm of normalized unconventional warfare, where there are no more rules to abide by. This is why warfare today is not an unrestricted frenzy, and why conventional state forces don’t go around bombing everything into oblivion. There are certain rules that prevent these states from doing so, even while it remains their undoing both tactically and strategically. Unconventional forces, on the other hand, do not follow these rules. They operate in such a way that dismisses no possible paths to victory, even if it includes horrendous abuses of human rights and war crimes. In this way, unconventional forces are not limited in the same way as conventional state forces. They act with impunity and take whatever steps they need to in order to triumph over their foes. They will kill non-combatants, burn villages, and execute prisoners if it satisfies their objectives and puts them closer to their goals.

The Coming Generation of Warfare

The question remains: how does a state win a guerrilla war against unconventional forces without violating the rules of civilized warfare? The answer to this lies in the parallel
development of new military technologies and tactics that will render unconventional warfare both untenable and unsustainable to non-state actors and their forces. This will ultimately lead to what can be considered the fifth generation of warfare, one where advances in technology and the impacts of globalization result in the indefinite triumph of the state over unconventional forces (Vest, 2001). This fifth generation will come about as a profound shift in both the strategic objectives of states as well as the means by which they achieve these objectives, which will rely heavily on improved technology and its military application.

In order to determine how and along what lines this new generation of warfare will develop, it is important to first examine the key factors that will be crucial in its rise as well as the downfall of the fourth generation of warfare. This means defining the terms by which new generations of warfare have evolved in the past as well as examining case studies in the form of armed conflicts in which these generational changes were evident (Joes, 2007). Since the beginning of armed conflict, four distinct generations have emerged and determined the rules by which we as humans have won and lost conflicts amongst ourselves. Each of these generations revolved around elements that defined successful warfare in that era. Since the industrial revolution and the adoption of gunpowder as a primary tool of war, several new generations have materialized and overtaken the previous. Each generation held different elements of tactics and strategy in high regard, and each served as a response to the previous form of warfare. More importantly, each new generation defined the rules by which states would engage in war for the foreseeable future. States that adopted new generations of warfare during transitory periods were often met with exceptionally beneficial results, at least until other states adopted the new generation of warfare for themselves. This created an incentive to both experiment and explore new ways of fighting conflicts for states and helped to spur the development of new military strategies.
Case studies can prove both useful and informative in determining transitional periods of generations of warfare as well as providing important insight into the current tactics of the present generation. Each case study can showcase both successful and unsuccessful tactics in combating unconventional forces as well as demonstrate new tactics and their effectiveness. For the purpose of this thesis, most case studies will be from conflicts of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, when the third generation of warfare gave way to the fourth generation. These case studies will include both well-known and well-researched conflicts, like the Vietnam War, as well as lesser known but still important conflicts like the Rhodesian Bush War and the First Indochina War. Included among these lesser known case studies will also be several conflicts in Africa and Asia like the cases of Nigeria, Angola, and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. These case studies will not be differentiated by ideology or politics, but rather be considered from the perspective of the conventional state actor. Because of this, these case studies will span the spectrum to include states such as the United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom, among others. They will ultimately serve as an important way to determine those especially crucial methods used in the fight against non-state actors fielding unconventional forces.

**Literature Review**

As this thesis is focused on several core aspects of both military theory and strategic thought, it seems reasonable to divide the many sources into distinct categories that serve to illustrate the different points of view that will be analyzed. For the purpose of this thesis, the discussed topics will be divided into three categories that serve to better illustrate the critical analysis taking place. These categories include generational warfare, conventional warfare, and unconventional warfare. Generational warfare will serve as the theoretical root for most of the thesis, as both conventional and unconventional warfare can be grouped into some type of generational warfare.
Conventional warfare will serve to primarily cover the interests of the state, who is almost always the main opponent of unconventional warfare and the non-state actors who practice it. This will include analysis of strategies set forth by conventional powers like the United States and the Soviet Union. Finally, unconventional warfare will include all the strategies and tactics practiced by non-state actors like guerrilla movements and any otherwise non-governmental armed movements (Bustamante, 2014). This category will include works from prominent guerrilla leaders like Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh and will try to examine the way non-state actors treat warfare.

The first category, generational warfare, will include both examinations of fourth generational warfare as well as possible inroads to fifth generational warfare. The fourth generation, which began in the mid-20th century, is the most modern and current generation of warfare practiced today (Vest, 2001). Centered around the rise of the non-state actor, and focused increasingly on guerrilla warfare, the fourth generation emphasizes unconventional forms of warfare to defeat the imposing threat posed by conventional state actors (Hammes, 2007). It is the first generation in which we see the de-standardization of warfare on almost all levels. From the absence of uniforms to the lack of an organized hierarchy in many cases, the fourth generation of warfare expands upon what it means to be a combatant in a military or otherwise violent conflict (Phelan, 2011).

The second category, conventional warfare, centers on the traditional rules by which warfare has been conducted for the last several centuries. It is based on the idea of supremacy on the part of the state and dismisses the actions of non-state actors as both strategically and tactically inferior (Joes, 2007). The state operates in the realm of open reality, where actions are open to criticism and scrutiny from the entire world. Therefore, the theory of proportionality plays a large role in the use of conventional forces and tactics by the state (Rommel, 2006). Even though the state has jets, tanks, and submarines, all those resources
are useless in the face of international condemnation (Selden, 2016). In this way, conventional tactics have often fallen in favor of unconventional tactics in recent years. States have found themselves in a quandary to which they have no answer (Kiss, 2014). In order to win conflicts, they must utilize the full force of their arsenals when fighting the enemy. But this becomes impossible when the enemy fights unconventionally, and as a result stalemates and even defeats become a common occurrence for conventional forces (Lieber, 2011).

The third and final category of unconventional warfare totally dismisses the ideas put forth by states over the last several centuries of warfare for the sole purpose of one thing: winning. Unconventional warfare rejects the traditional form of warfare favored by most states in order to operate beyond the rules of what can be called “civilized war” (Mao, 1961). It allows non-state actors, the primary proponents of unconventional warfare, to move beyond the realm of what is deemed acceptable and into the more ruthless realm of winning at any cost (Preston, 2004). This is why many guerrilla movements are ultimately successful. Because these actors do whatever it takes to win, they use their own form of reasoning to justify the means by which they achieve their goals.

**Origins and Development of Guerrilla Movements**

Guerrilla warfare as a concept has existed for centuries. Since the first army invaded a foreign realm, common men have taken up arms to fight a desperate war against a superior foe. Knowing they could not hope to match their enemy in the field, these men turned to shrewd and cunning tactics to defeat their enemies (Clausewitz, 1976). They knew their enemy, oftentimes better than they knew themselves, and used this advantage to gain the upper hand tactically. Men have fought this way for many different reasons, but they all share the common trait of being a guerrilla fighter.

The guerrilla fighter, as we know him today, is far different than the conventional soldier of the state. Broadly defined, he is a combatant that specializes in the art of
unconventional warfare and subversion. His motivations are different that those of the conventional soldier, and his methods and capabilities in combat are also significantly distinct. He often operates without external support, funding, or material resources, and does all of this against an overwhelmingly superior enemy. And while the guerrilla fighter of the modern day is very different from the first guerrillas of the Napoleonic Wars and the American Revolution, the two still share many of the same characteristics. These characteristics define what it means to be a guerrilla and separate unconventional forces of non-state actors from well-trained professional standing armies of the state (Mao, 1961). Among these characteristics include factors such as technology, human development, and advances in military codes of conduct. All of these factors have really served to define the world in which guerrillas today operate and fight.

While the guerrillas of today may share some things with the guerrillas of the past such as motivation and devotion to a unified objective or end state, guerrillas in the modern age enjoy many luxuries that past guerrillas did not. The guerrilla and partisan fighters of the Napoleonic Wars lacked modern automatic weapons, modern medicine, and perhaps most importantly, the mercy of conventional armies. Today, non-state actors and their fighters have the benefit of all three. One guerrilla can expel hundreds of rounds from his assault rifle, survive in the most inhospitable environments due to modern medical advancements, and can always rely on conventional armies to follow their own rules of conduct during war. This has given non-state actors a serious advantage in dealing with conventional forces, and is perhaps the key reason guerrilla movements have risen to such prominence in the present day.

The modern guerrilla movement that developed in the mid-20th century is very distinct in the fact that it was the first form of unconventional warfare to usurp the conventional state as the primary form of warfare in the modern day. Several elements can be used to define the guerrilla movements of the fourth generation of warfare. First, the presence
of a defined objective or goal that unites the entirety of a group of people must be clear and well-developed. This goal must have the support of enough people that either hold a common belief or share some sort of essential characteristic that unites them. This can be something as simple as religion or ethnicity or something as complex as ideology. Regardless of the reason, the supporters of this cause do what they do in opposition of the already-established order of the state that governs them. This factor is essential, as it is impossible for guerrilla movements to exist without a properly defined enemy to channel their aggression towards.

Secondly, guerrilla movements must have some type of organizational structure, no matter how small. This can be in the form of autonomous units or an established hierarchical structure. This is essential, as guerrillas acting with no orders and no objective are little more than criminals and looters. Finally, guerrilla movements must not lack for resources by way of popular support. When a movement loses the support of common people, it almost surely falls ruin to lack of supply and diminished morale. This is the ultimate enemy of the guerrilla movement. If the organization’s will to fight is broken, and its objective rendered either unachievable or obsolete, it will quickly vanish back into the realm of either peaceful action or total dissolution.

As nations have developed, warfare and the idea of civilized warfare have developed in parallel. Mostly a European idea born out of the Enlightenment, states at the time sought to elevate war and conflict out of the baser realm it previously resided in. No more was war and combat a senseless slaughter, but rather a refined and precise art that required the inclusion of regal and gentlemanly tactics. Out of this notion was born the first rules governing the practice of warfare. This was at first limited to bilateral agreements that concerned the treatment of captured prisoners but was soon expanded to include factors such as the treatment of non-combatants and bans on certain types of weaponry deemed inhumane.
The rise of unconventional warfare to such prominence was as unprecedented as the rise of non-state actors themselves. From the beginning of human civilization, the state has maintained an exclusive monopoly on the raising and fielding of military forces that act on the behalf of government or legitimate political movements. The guerrilla movements of the 20th century are among the most critical case studies in the examination of the death of third generation warfare and the subsequent rise of fourth generation warfare (Phelan, 2011).

Unconventional warfare rose to prominence on the heels of the Second World War, and since then has been the predominant form of warfare on Earth. I think the reasoning for this can be explained by several factors.

First, the defeat of Nazi Germany and Japan heralded the end of the multipolar world that the international community had known since the late 19th century. No longer could regional and minor powers choose to associate with one of many great powers present at the time. By the end of 1945, the only two undisputed superpowers left on the planet were the United States and Soviet Union. This marked the beginning of a state of bipolarity, not seen again for centuries on the regional stage, and never before seen on the world stage. This state of bipolarity was unique in the fact that it was especially focused on ideological differences that consisted of polar opposite ends of the political spectrum. Because of this, countries were left with a limited choice of only two superpowers with which to align themselves.

Knowing that the proliferation of nuclear weapons led to a changed state of warfare, both the USSR and USA endeavored to avoid the large-scale engagements that had been so prevalent in World War II, and instead opted to fight small piecemeal engagements between their respective aligned states. These proxy wars often consisted of a government backed by either the United States or Soviet Union fighting against a guerrilla movement backed by the other superpower state. In almost all of these proxy wars, unconventional warfare and guerrilla tactics played a major role for one side or another. Through these many
unconventional conflicts, new forms of warfare and new non-state actors began to emerge, given support by either the USA or USSR in their fight against each other (Selden, 2016). For roughly four decades, this remained the status quo, with the two behemoths never coming directly to blows, but rather picked and supported various armed political movements around the world in an effort to increase support for their ideology.

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, many celebrated the great victory won by the United States in the crusade against communism. This victory was short-lived, however, as the same non-state actors initially given support by the USA or USSR in earlier decades began to work against emerging American interests in earnest. Among these groups were movements like the Taliban, which enjoyed a great deal of American funds and material support in their fight against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Kiss, 2014). This movement would later go on to directly oppose American efforts to combat terrorism during the later US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. In this way, both the United States and Soviet Union had a hand in the creation and strengthening of many non-state actors operating today. By breathing life into various social, political, or religious movements, the dominant states at the time went on to foster future threats to their interests around the globe.

Now, non-state actors have developed to such a level that they pose a much more serious threat to even the most developed states. This has been further exacerbated by technology and technological improvement as well. By the turn of the 21st century, warfare and the techniques used by conventional and unconventional actors alike had accelerated to such a level that made non-state actors equally if not more lethal of a fighting force than sovereign states. The hardware and technological development teams of the Cold War in both the United States and Soviet Union focused not only on conventional weapons of war, but unconventional weapons as well. They made things like portable guided missile platforms, advanced mobile field hospitals, and assault rifles that rarely jammed in the worst conditions.
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All of these assets eventually found their way into the hands of non-state actors over time and were often used to devastating effect against conventional forces. These weapons were easy to use, simple to maintain, and were oftentimes gifted to guerrilla forces by their ideological benefactor. This all resulted in a state of warfare where non-state actors are operating on the same technological level as conventional actors and are often using conventional weapons to much higher efficiency.

With the establishment of the United States as the unipolar superpower of the world came the assumption that all threats would be crushed under overwhelming American might (Bustamante, 2014). This assumption was ill-made, and America was humbled not ten years after the fall of its greatest adversary during the 9/11 attacks. These attacks served as a wake-up call for the American defense community to finally rise and combat the spread of international terrorism and other forms of extremism around the world. Even still, the rise of many non-state actors could not be quickly undone, and as a result the United States and its allies have been forced to deal with various movements from every corner of the globe (Lieber, 2011).

Thus far, the United States has been met with little in the way of results. Several wars and trillions of dollars later, the United States has still yet to define an appropriate strategy for combatting non-state actors practicing unconventional warfare around the world. All the tanks, jets, and advanced missile systems of the US have yet to beat motivated fighters acting on nothing but fervor and raw tenacity in pursuit of a goal. This is ultimately why the fifth generation of warfare will usurp the fourth generation, as the powers that be cannot stand idly by while they are bested time and time again by superior tactics and strategic objectives (Hammes, 2007). The fifth generation will be crafted for the specific purpose of opposing unconventional warfare, defeating non-state actors, and re-establishing the supremacy of the conventional state for the next generation of warfare.
Common Guerrilla Strategies and Tactics

Guerilla forces often employ a wide variety of unique and cunning tactics in order to triumph against a much larger foe. Many guerrilla conflicts subscribe to the idea of “winning whole”, an idea initially taught by the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu. In fact, further inspection of most guerrilla tactics will show that focus is not placed entirely on the idea of winning in open combat, but winning in all areas outside combat (Tzu, 2014). An essential part of this is morale. Morale, or the mental and emotional capacity of a group to fight, is a critical part of any war. A leader may have the strongest, fastest, most well-equipped troops, but if those troops lack the will to carry on and fight, they will almost certainly face defeat against a foe with superior confidence and motivation. Fortunately for guerrillas and other unconventional fighters, this motivation is often tied to the very reason for waging war in the first place (Joes, 2007). Men and women fight harder knowing that their homes and families are on the line and will seldom break ranks and flee from battle when asked to fight or die. This does not mean, however, that guerrillas are blind fools who needlessly spend lives. Guerrillas know that if they can retreat to fight another day, this will always be a preferential alternative to dying in a heroic final stand. This is because guerrillas and other unconventional forces operate with the aim of winning a war of attrition with the enemy. If a non-state actor consolidated all their forces, they would be immediately be shattered in open combat by the superior numbers and tactics of the state, which excels in the field of conventional warfare. Because of this, guerrilla movements and their leaders often formulate long term strategies rather than short term tactical plans (Hart, 1991).

The short-term tactical plans of guerrillas and other unconventional actors contribute greatly to the speed at which conflicts are won and lost by non-state actors. Any decent guerrilla fighter knows that they are in a position of inferiority by conventional standards. They often have less weapons, funding, resources, and men than the opposing state, and must
take these facts into account when designing and executing tactical plans. And while all these factors may seem like hinderances to a conventional actor, they can oftentimes be used to great advantage by the guerrillas in question. Fewer weapons and resources means less to hide and less for state forces to capture and destroy, while less funding and less outside support means less responsibility to fulfill agendas that may not comply with the ultimate end state of the guerrilla movement. These are just a few ways that unconventional forces can turn disadvantages to their advantage, and ultimately their strength in the conflict.

Unconventional forces are also exceptionally proficient at using whatever resources they have at their disposal in order to win small engagements and disrupt enemy forces (Joes, 2007). One of the best examples of this was in Vietnam, where both the Viet Minh and later Viet Cong found great support among the local peasantry. These guerrillas would enlist the help of the elderly, women, and children to sharpen sticks for punji stakes, or fashion makeshift bombs from unexploded American or French ordinance. This kind of ingenuity and innovative spirit is commonly found amongst guerrilla movements and is an essential part of why they often succeed in the end. In addition to using the support of the local populace to fulfill their own ends, guerrillas will also look to their enemies to fulfill their goals. While the conventional state remains their enemy, guerrillas are seldom opposed to using the weapons and hardware of the state against itself. Small bands of guerrillas will oftentimes raid supply depots and even go as far as to completely strip the bodies of their fallen conventional counterparts for items as simple as boots or wristwatches. In this way, guerrillas seek to make the most out of every single move they make and aim to gain as much as possible with the least amount of risk (Mao, 1964).

By now, it should be clear that most of the short-term tactical plans of guerrilla movements do not involve direct attacks against the enemy. Very few successful guerrilla leaders have directed their fighters to seek and destroy enemy patrols because they stand very
little to gain in doing so. A guerrilla commander would much rather kill enemy troops with booby traps or landmines before ever thinking of engaging them in the field. Because of this, it may seem that offensive guerrilla tactics are mostly “passive” in a sense. This could not be farther from the truth. Guerrilla offensives, when used, are most often meant to either acquire more resources or a position of strategic significance for a future operation (Mao, 1964). These offensives are few and far between, however, as conducting any sort of offensive operation immediately puts the state on the defensive, where it is most comfortable. So, guerrilla leaders must adjust for this by revolving their plans around the element of surprise and numerical superiority. This also involves attacking the points in the enemy’s defense where they believe resistance will be at its weakest (Miyamoto & Harris, 1974). All of these factors combined allow for a seemingly unchallenging force to suddenly overwhelm what should by all means be a superior foe. This can be seen in Afghanistan, where Mujahedeen and later Taliban fighters would oftentimes isolate and attack weak points in Soviet or American defenses, oftentimes to great effect with minimal casualties (Smith, 2007).

Guerilla strategy is far different from guerrilla tactics in the sense that guerrilla strategy does not aim to acquire resources or supplies but rather advance the long-term goals of the movement as a whole (Clausewitz, 1976). Whether these goals are as simple as winning the present conflict or advancing some other aim, guerrillas will devote much of their efforts into playing the long game and attempting to outlast their opponent. In taking another one of Sun Tzu’s lessons, guerrilla movements will often seek to constantly wear down their opponents over time (Tzu, 2014). This type of warfare is mainly psychological and requires that the unconventional actor constantly harass and undermine the forces of the conventional state wherever they may be. This is meant to establish an air of uncertainty among the conventional forces and give them no rest or respite from a constant state of combat. Sun Tzu advises that the inferior force must give their enemy no rest and must not
relent in their campaign to fatigue the enemy until their will is sapped. This is oftentimes used in concert with a guerrilla offensive, so the maximum effectiveness is achieved. All guerrilla strategies need not be directed at the enemy though. In many cases, guerrillas will turn to the countryside and seek support from the local populace (Kiss, 2014). Simple yet effective attributes like ethnicity and religion are powerful motivators and are often used to unite people under one banner for a united goal. This is often intermixed with some sort of ideological fanaticism as well, where political officers attempt to use ideological reasons in order to provoke action and stir anti-state dissent amongst the populace. This was the tactic of the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War, where communist propaganda officers would turn local support towards the plight of the Viet Cong and therefore grant them more support in their fight against the Americans. This strategy is especially simple due to the fact that most of the guerrilla fighters likely come from the local region and have family in the immediate area that grant them both materials support and strong motivation for fighting in the first place (Kiss, 2014). Ultimately, guerrilla strategy can share certain elements with guerrilla tactics and fighting styles, but will always place the long term goal, or end state, at the forefront of all plans and operations.

Prominent Guerrilla Movements of the 20th and 21st Centuries

The last century of warfare has seen the non-state actor turn from an insignificant byproduct of conventional war to the uncontested leader in modern warfare today. Over this time, several conflicts have marked a progression into the fourth generation of warfare we recognize today. The first significant cases of such unprecedented unconventional warfare occurred shortly after the Second World War in the reconquered European colonies of Southeast Asia. Liberated from Japan after 1945, much of Indochina sought to seek independence from its colonial overlord of France. Once ideological differences began to exacerbate the situation, stirred by Soviet and later Chinese influence, real dissent against the
French began to take hold. Even though this was the case, much of the international community still expected France, a weakened yet still first-rate European power, to easily defeat the communist Viet Minh fighters and regain control of their colony. When this did not occur, the Western world was shocked that the once-great French could lose a conflict with what they saw as nothing more than armed peasants. Even after the disaster at Dien Bien Phu and French retreat from Indochina, the world still had not learned any lessons in unconventional warfare. As a result, many of the very same mistakes were made when the United States landed troops in Vietnam. The resulting conflict that followed was nothing short of an objective strategic military failure on the part of the American forces (Summers, 1995). By failing to understand their enemy and the rules by which he operated, the US troops fought every engagement at a strategic disadvantage (Summers, 1995).

With progression into future decades, states still attempted to defeat unconventional non-state actors through conventional means. Perhaps the most stark example of this is Afghanistan. Not called the “graveyard of empires” without reason, Afghanistan stands as one of the most difficult places to conquer on the entire planet. Its terrain is rough and mountainous, and its citizens are steadfast in their beliefs and extremely loyal to their own people. For centuries, the greatest powers on Earth have attempted to subdue and conquer it in some way or another. From the British Empire to the Soviet Union and United States, all have been met with the same result. Afghanistan did not remain unconquered due to the incompetence of these powers, but rather due to several key factors that aided in the development and practice of unconventional warfare tactics by Afghan tribesmen and guerrilla fighters. Firstly, the system by which they organized themselves was an essential part in the development of a coordinated resistance.

For centuries, Afghanistan was fought over by petty rulers and warlords, each hoping to conquer the entire country. The only thing that successfully united the many tribes of the
region was the presence of a foreign invader. This was fortunate, as a united resistance effort was much harder to overcome than several smaller and more scattered tribes or warlords. This, coupled with the unforgiving terrain and overextension of supply lines made defeat for invading forces an inevitability rather than a question of winning or losing a few battles. The Soviet Union learned this lesson the hard way. When their forces crashed over the border in 1979, they expected their armored vehicles and helicopters to swiftly help in propping up the failing communist government. The resulting conflict between the communists and the Islamic militias lasted roughly ten years and cost the Soviet Union dearly in terms of material and prestige. When the United States invaded Afghanistan again after the 9/11 attacks, it thought that it would avoid the same fate that befell the Soviets just decades prior. They were sorely mistaken, and instead sustained an unsuccessful ground campaign that lasted until 2014, with many troops still in the country today, though far less than a decade ago. (Lieber, 2011). The uniqueness of Afghanistan lies not in the fact that so many have tried and failed to conquer it, but rather that it serves as the only case study that proves time and time again that unconventional forces with the support of the populace and guerrilla tactics will almost always triumph against a conventional state employing the most modern weaponry and foreign advisors.

One of the most interesting cases in which unconventional forces were deployed and used on such a massive scale is post-colonial Africa. After the Second World War, when most of Europe was in ruins and unable to effectively manage its colonies, many African independence movements rose to prominence. Looking for new allies in the region, the United States and Soviet Union soon began making inroads towards emerging governments in the region. While most African conflicts involved one or more parties fighting for control of a broken state apparatus, there were some especially unique cases. The state of Rhodesia, officially founded in 1965 through a Unilateral Declaration of Independence, was a white-
minority ruled state in Southern Africa. Increasingly pressured to transition to a multi-racial democracy, the Rhodesians instead opted to cut ties with Great Britain and attempt to fend off the coming storm of revolution on their own (Preston, 2004). Within a decade, they found themselves embroiled in the conflict now known as the Rhodesian Bush War. This conflict involved both the Rhodesian Security Forces and the African nationalist groups ZANU and ZAPU, and serves as a great case study for the potential effectiveness of the state actor.

Throughout the war, the Rhodesian Security Forces employed increasingly unconventional and ungentlemanly tactics in order to seek out and destroy the rebels. And while they still lost in the end due to external pressure and sanctions, they serve as a reminder that the state, given the right leadership and mentality, can be a potent adversary to unconventional guerrilla forces (Preston, 2004).

The Generations of Warfare

Examination and speculation surrounding the fifth generation of warfare requires further explanation on the origins of the prior four generations as well as the origins of the theory of generational warfare in general. The concept of generational warfare involves both the way states and non-state actors conduct themselves during armed conflict as well as the rules by which that the previously mentioned actors abide by during said conflicts. Generational warfare operates on the idea that war is in a constant state of change, and both states and non-state actors must attempt to anticipate these changes in order to be successful in the realm of strategy and tactics. If this is not done, a state may fall behind and risk succumbing to superior styles of warfare.

The whole theory behind generational warfare begins in 1648 during the Peace of Westphalia, the peace that ended the Thirty Years’ War. This event is widely seen as the beginning of generational gunpowder warfare as we know it. Precursor activities going back to antiquity and Medieval times consisted largely of grand battle formations and armies
composed of peasant levies, with few professional soldiers or standing armies to speak of (Blaydes & Chaney, 2013). Warfare was conducted by both state and non-state and was considered a relatively chaotic affair with little rules governing conduct or behavior of armies and leaders. Professional training was widely reserved for members of the nobility and the bulk of most armies consisted of untrained peasants and farmers (Blaydes & Chaney, 2013). As gunpowder was slowly adopted over the 15th and 16th centuries, armies and tactics began to change and adapt to the new tools of warfare. Now, even the most well-trained knight could be felled by a peasant with gunpowder weaponry. This changed the rules by which nations operated, as well as their priorities when it came to the raising and maintaining of armies.

Once the Peace of Westphalia established the theory of state sovereignty, the first wave of generational warfare was solidified and commonly recognized among nations. The first generation, also the longest generation, spanned from 1648 to roughly 1860, or the period around the American Civil War. Key characteristics of this generation include the use of line and column tactics, where armies would take turns trading volley fire until one side sustained enough casualties to cause a rout. As a result, line infantry became the premier unit in most modern European armies. First armed with inaccurate smoothbore muskets then more-accurate rifled muskets along with early repeating rifles, these soldiers were oftentimes expertly drilled and trained to the absolute apex of discipline under fire. They followed officers of noble birth from prestigious families and were often recruited from among the lower classes in society.

The fields on which many battles over the course of the first generation were fought were both orderly and well-established. The idea of trickery or deceptive tactics was often considered “ungentlemanly” when facing the enemy, and officers were oftentimes more than willing to send their men to battle for the sake of personal honor. The first generation is also
the generation in which the strong culture of military tradition and order was born. Many of these traditions have been passed on over the years and some still retain their use in various historic military units around the world. Many states also outfitted their line infantry with bright or distinct colors that were used for the purpose of recognition during the smoky chaos of line battles. Oftentimes, regiments from different cities or regions would go so far as to outfit their own unit with a distinct color or uniform piece that differentiated them even further from their comrades on the field. A great example of this can be found in the many uniforms of the Napoleonic Wars, where units like the British Coldstream Guards and Prussian Potsdam Grenadiers could be easily identified by both uniform and regimental colors on the battlefield. Various things such as distinctive uniforms, insignia, and military rank are all products of the military order created by the first generation of warfare (Keegan, 2004). As a result, the first generation is the most impactful generation simply due to two important reasons: its effects are felt in every succeeding generation, and it was the longest lasting generation that involved ranged gunpowder warfare.

The second generation is a direct continuation of the first. Sharing characteristics such as the same strong military order and tradition of the first, the second generation is the first great leap into modern warfare. It is widely considered the first form of industrialized warfare and features the full embracement of a completely mobilized industrial country in a state of total war. Small developments of the second generation can be seen in earlier conflicts such as the Spanish-American War and the Russo-Japanese war of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the first great test of new second generational developments came with the start of World War I. This is where the second generation truly took hold and became the norm amongst the most powerful states on Earth. It emphasized the supremacy of massed firepower by way of indirect artillery fire and grand battle plans that resulted in total coordination between infantry and artillery forces. In addition to this, it also placed great importance on
the usefulness and efficacy of well-fortified static positions with embedded machine guns and mortar pits (Krause, 2013). Repeating bolt-action rifles were considered the standard at this point and early submachine guns along with light machine guns began to make their way into combat, putting the firepower of a squad into the hands of one soldier. This generation saw the death of many traditional military units of great importance such as cavalry and placed greater importance on the utility of troops like combat engineers and artillerymen (Krause, 2013). The second generation is similar to the first in that it still retains much of the old guard attitude of first generational warfare with none of the same end objectives.

For much of the first generation, wars were fought for such petty reasons that it was often said that war was the “sport of kings.” This was no longer the case once states began to develop comprehensive plans for regional and even world domination, as a great powers did. Germany is a great example of this. From its unification in 1870 until the First World War, the rise of German power directly challenged the status quo of both the European and international order. States like Great Britain saw this, and acted to combat the rise of German influence, though many knew such actions would only lead to war (Keegan, 2004). War became so effective and so costly in terms of material and manpower that states could no longer afford to go to war over something as trivial as an insult or broken agreement. World War I showed the world that the second generation of warfare was one focused on attrition and the idea of bleeding the enemy through relentless barrages of massed artillery strikes and infantry assaults, and this would go on to cost states that participated in this style of conflict a great deal of men and resources.

The static and relentless stalemate of the second generation of warfare went as quickly as it came. Realizing that such warfare was far too costly, the industrialized nations of the world feared the idea of a Second World War that imitated the first. This would not come to fruition thanks to the development of mobile warfare theory and the increased use of
both armored vehicles and motorized trucks in war. Pioneered by the Germans at the outset of the Second World War, the “Blitzkrieg”, or lightning war, shocked the world with its rapidity and ferocity as well as its effectiveness (Reilly, 1940). The third generation of warfare was focused not on victory through superior firepower, but rather victory through outmaneuvering the enemy. An essential part of mobile warfare doctrine and Blitzkrieg tactics is the idea of massed armored formations designed to rapidly advance and encircle enemy positions before destroying them (Rommel, 2006).

These tactics were primarily focused on the elements of speed and surprise along with coordinated attacks that combined the synchronized efforts of infantry, armored, artillery, and air formations to completely overwhelm the enemy defense. While much of the third generation in practice was offensive, the defensive tactics were equally focused on elements like speed and encirclement. Defense within the third generation involved the idea of a flexible frontline where a defender could draw an enemy in before cutting him off from supply and reinforcement. This sort of elastic defense was an extremely effective tactic that allowed nations such as Germany to gain the upper hand in the early stages of the Second World War (Reilly, 1940). The third generation served not only to completely destroy the static tactics and stagnant trench warfare of the second generation, but also made great strides in determining the conditions under which the fourth generation of warfare would develop.

After the end of World War II, most of the former great powers of the world lay in ruins. Very few countries maintained the industrial base to support the extremely demanding, yet effective tactics put forth during the genesis of the third generation of warfare. The only two nations still capable of this, the United States and Soviet Union, therefore became the last two great powers on Earth and ascended to superpower status. It is important to note that the third generation of warfare is not truly dead in the way that the first or second is. Many conventional militaries around the world today, including the United States, view the third
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generation of warfare as the pinnacle of modern industrial warfare between conventional actors. Much of the conflict anticipated between the USA and USSR during the Cold War of the post-World War II period was still very much centered around the planning and execution of battle plans using many of the very same tactics devised at the onset of the third generation. The only way in which the fourth generation truly usurped the third generation was in the sense that it became the dominant and most frequently seen form of warfare in the world during this time, with this trend continuing into the modern era (Vest, 2001). Despite the overwhelming prioritization of third generation tactics seen during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the fourth generation has served as a method by which industrialized nations could conduct war without putting their own populations and resources at risk. This is done by the fighting of unconventional-style proxy wars that occur to this very day, where fighting is done in a far away land, isolated from the developed world. That does not mean conventional actors are afraid of such conflicts, however. Oftentimes, they more often than not are the instigators of these wars and will go to great lengths to see their interests advanced.

One of the key hallmarks behind the fourth generation of warfare was the creation of a concept known as the violent ideological network. Widely known to scholars and military theorists as the starting point of international terrorism, the groups and networks operating by this theory are part of one of the defining elements of fourth generation warfare. These actors operate on the concept of a singular motivating force that does not exist at the state level such as race, ethnicity, and religion. They participate in limited warfare and excel in a state of chaotic, uncontrolled conflict. The fourth generation initially emerged as a method for conventional powers to advance their agendas while keeping both casualties and combat far away from their homelands. However, despite this initial purpose, the fourth generation soon evolved into a way for non-state interests to achieve their own local and regional strategic
goals. This oftentimes involved conflict with the state, and the guerrilla tactic of breaking the will of a superior enemy became the norm in unconventional conflicts. This, coupled with the parallel development of other technologies, gave unconventional forces a huge boon when it came to fighting and winning against a conventionally superior force.

Another defining element of the fourth generation of warfare was the rapid acceleration of technological advance that made the fourth generation unlike any other previous generation. This technological advance was in the form of both military developments as well as seemingly innocent civilian developments. The fourth generation of warfare became the first generation in which mass media and modern telecommunication became an integral part of psychological warfare within conflicts around the world (Grossman, 1995). Now, viewers in the developed world were able to view the direct consequences of their leaders’ foreign policy decisions from the comfort of their own homes. This changed the dynamic of war, and conventional states could no longer act with near-impunity when dealing with unconventional forces. Every single operation, plan, and mission was scrutinized and documented by media personnel, and this forced states to strictly adhere to a more “civilized” style of warfare, which in-turn crippled their ability to crush their weaker unconventional opponents with brutal efficiency. For every newspaper and tv station that reported on a successful air raid against guerrilla forces, another newspaper reported on the ruthless massacre of innocent civilians by state air forces.

Fourth generational warfare is also both pervasive and extremely personal when contrasted with earlier generations. With bases and cells all across the world, small groups of guerrillas or terrorists can inflict untold amounts of morale damage on conventional states and their populations. These cells often operate without any sort of outside support or direction apart from the grand objective of their overlord organization. This high level of autonomy makes them both exceptionally volatile and unwieldy, as each cell is effectively its
own miniature version of the organization that has manifested in the form that best fits its assigned locale. Due to this, an organization does not have to limit itself to any one realm of tactics within the field of unconventional warfare and may accomplish its goals by any means at its disposal.

Limited theaters of organized warfare are also now a thing of the past, as fourth generational conflict is not limited to any one region or continent, but rather manifests itself wherever instability and chaos runs rampant (Greene, 2006). Wherever there is interregional conflict and strife, unconventional fighters will be active and looking to advance their own selfish interests. Blurring the lines between soldier and civilian, the unconventional fighter is an expert at blending in with the local population, and will look to them for both support and protection from the state. He will take advantage of every single situation and turn it to his advantage both in the realm of combat and the realm of non-violent behavior. Even with all of this, the principal factor that solidifies the effectiveness of the fourth generation is the rise in availability of information to the common person. The fourth generation saw the expansion and distribution of information to every corner of the planet, and the world was forced to reap the consequences. African militias were given knowledge used by US Navy SEALs, Eastern European terrorists received Soviet Spetsnaz manuals, and Afghan tribesmen were personally trained by the American Green Berets. This dissemination of knowledge was unlike anything that occurred prior, and history has shown that this information and knowledge has played perhaps the most vital role in the rise of non-state actors around the world.

Analysis of the State vs. the Non-State Actor

The series of conflicts that have occurred between state and non-state forces over the last century are only the latest in a long timeline of unorganized movements rising up against their governments. The only difference now is that the so-called ‘unorganized movement’ has become both just as organized, cohesive, and well-armed as the government. Why has this
been allowed to happen? Shouldn’t the state have been weary of such organizations gathering strength? The answer may be surprising. Perhaps the greatest reason states did not fear the rise of non-state actors was simply because they assumed they would never act against them directly. That they could be supported and supplied, then directed at the enemy or government of their choice and left to wreak havoc. The United States certainly did not anticipate that many of the Mujahedeen militiamen trained to fight the Soviet Union would become senior officers in the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The United States made the mistake of thinking that they could control what they created; they could not. For even an organization dedicated to a single goal or ideal is comprised of people, and people are fickle by nature. They are not honor-bound to fight and die at the command of benefactors thousands of miles away (Lawrence, 1991). Early guerrillas knew this and still know it today. As a result, the relationship between states and non-state actors has shifted from being mostly mutualistic to being widely parasitic in nature. States that support rebel movements in other states have no guarantee that, should the rebels take power, that state will be content as a satellite of its new overlord. More often than not, the rebels take supplies and arms from their state benefactor, and when the war is finally lost, only death and destruction has resulted from so much wasted time and resources.

The non-state actors see things another way. While they mostly know their place as the inferior negotiating party when working with states, they oftentimes have their own separate goals and aims that may conflict with that of their overlords. As a result, states have learned over time to distrust non-state actors and prefer victory through conflict to peaceful negotiation. Willingness to negotiate with non-state actors also grants them some legitimacy in the eyes of regional governments, if not their own government, and further undermines the goals of the state. But, over time, many non-state actors have come to both fight and negotiate on even ground with the state and have even risen to such prominence that they
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become the state itself. This is, for the most part, the ultimate goal of non-state actors. Full control of the state apparatus, or full sovereignty to create and govern a new state are by and large the main goals of all non-state movements. Even seemingly internationalist movements like Al-Qaeda and ISIS have plans for a global caliphate and a distinct territory they seek to legally govern. Because of this fact, states tend to regard grandiose claims made by non-state actors as either dismissible or a serious threat to be countered, depending on both the strength of the organization in question and the strength of the state it seeks to oppose.

How Technology Has and Continues to Change War

Technology and technological advancement has always been a key factor in the victory of a state at war. For much of history, the more technologically advanced state triumphed over their obsolete opponents almost every time. Why then, do modern, well-armed, states lose conflicts against non-state actors armed with rusted and broken equipment. Simply put, the state with more and better technology is fighting the wrong kind of war. The last time the world experienced real open-field combat between two states with a distinct frontline was the Korean War, and military leaders still think in these terms today. Technological development has also followed this pattern, and unconventional developments and advances have been sidelined in favor of hi-tech tanks, jets, and submarines. Still, what unconventional advancements have been made have proven deadly in the hands of non-state actors. Exceptionally durable assault rifles, cell phone bombs, and other tools of warfare have served to grant additional boons to non-state actors and unconventional forces.

This does not mean that technology will not continue to change warfare, however. For each advancement made by one state, another state is seeking to build a way to counter and negate the threat posed by the advancement of the first state. Non-state actors are not exempt from this rule and can even be considered in a position of disadvantage, as they lack the resources to make technological advancements of their own. This is one of the fields of
warfare where the state can finally triumph over the non-state. Already, states have made
great strides in the development of military technology designed specifically for the purpose
of identifying, isolating, and destroying unconventional forces across the globe. Surveillance
has shrunk the world to such a degree that within a few short years, no jungle, forest, or
mountain hideaway will be free from the eyes of the state. Artificial intelligence has
advanced to such a degree that within the decade, autonomous drones and planes will roam
the skies, seeking out guerrilla forces from thousands of feet with software so advanced it can
sense a man’s heartbeat. The power in the technology of the state lies in being able to craft
and engineer equipment designed to drag unconventional forces out of the shadows and into
the gunsights of state forces (Smith, 2007). In order to further ensure victory for forces on the
ground, states have also begun exploration into specialized exoskeletons for their soldiers.
These exoskeletons serve as a primitive yet promising precursor to more advanced suits of
body armor and the pinnacle of super soldier technology: power armor. With such heavy
advantages on the ground, states can turn their soldiers into walking juggernauts, capable of
laying waste to unconventional forces armed with the very same automatic weapons as their
state counterparts. All of these advancements are part of a multi-pronged approach that some
states are hoping will turn the tide in the never-ending fight against guerrilla movements and
non-state actors around the world.

Successful Tactics Against Guerrillas

While the fourth generation does heavily favor non-state actors, that does not in any
way mean that conventional state forces have not occasionally been met with success in
fighting guerrillas. When it comes to state tactics, two distinct approaches are among those
favored by most Western militaries. The first of these approaches to guerrilla wars involves
the primary objective of sapping the will to fight of the guerrilla movement. If the state can in
any way accomplish this, the guerrillas have no choice but to throw down their arms and
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return to their homes, believing their cause either lost or somewhat fulfilled (Cohen, 2016). States accomplish by attacking the very reason why the guerrilla is fighting. This does not simply mean the state limits itself to options involving armed combat either. Oftentimes, states will attempt to first use a mixture of diplomacy and appeasement in order to negate the threat posed by the guerrillas (Handel 2001). States may even offer money as a form of appeasement, as was the case with the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil Tigers. However, this strategy is seldom successful, as these movements fight for an ideal or goal, not for money (Cohen, 2016). The state will then attempt to reach out to those in the population and will attempt to turn them to the cause of the state. This is easier said than done in many countries, as populations are oftentimes spread far and wide and vary in terms of ethnicity and religion. This is a tactic favored by either ethically stout or militarily weak states, and while it is sometimes successful in geographically smaller states, oftentimes leads to nothing. Few states have successfully attempted this method of dealing with guerrillas, and have only done so at the cost of massive governmental reforms and policy changes, essentially accomplishing the goals of the guerrillas without firing a single shot.

The second distinct approach to dealing with guerrilla movements is quite simple. A strategy of scorched earth, zero tolerance policies combined with martial law and suppression of civil movements will force the guerrillas to either come out and fight or wither and die in their holes. This approach is very common in Africa, where rebel movements are transnational and abundant. A president or dictator has no wish to negotiate with the rebels and gives no thought to them as former citizens of his country, only as his enemies. Sometimes, a guerrilla movement even gives an African leader pretext for genocide, given that the rebels are of an opposing ethnic group within the country. This makes it very easy to both delegitimize and dehumanize the enemy and leaves no question as to whether rebels should be dealt with fairly or humanely. This exact scenario has happened repeatedly in
African states such as Nigeria and Angola, where ethnic groups still clash today. This approach, despite its apparent effectiveness, is most often counter-intuitive when dealing with guerrillas or rebels. The uncompromising ruthlessness behind this approach leaves no question in the guerrilla’s mind that his cause is worth fighting for, and mistreatment only serves to further his resolve when fighting state forces. Any rebel will have an easier time fighting against an enemy that has oppressed his people and disrespected his rights as a citizen. The only way by which this approach would work is if the degree of domination by the state became absolute, and there was literally nobody left to oppose its rule. This, however, is a hollow victory at best. A state should be fighting to preserve its people and its resources, not killing every disobedient citizen until there are no citizens at all. It is not worth ruling a state if the only thing to be ruled over is a smoldering pile of ashes. Therefore, it is almost never worthwhile for a state to embark on a campaign of total destruction and relentless domination against their non-state counterparts. It will only grant legitimacy to the idea that the state itself is tyrannical in nature and strengthen the resolve of unconventional forces to fight.

**Guerrilla Perspective**

In the eyes of the conventional state, the guerrilla is an untrained, undisciplined, and poorly armed agent of the opposing non-state actor. To the local populace and his own organization, the guerrilla is much more. At first, it would seem that the outlook for a guerrilla is a bleak one. He is considered inferior in almost every single way to his state counterpart. The only thing he has which is arguably stronger than that of his opponent is belief in his cause. Some may call it brainwashing or indoctrination, but one way or another guerrillas and other rebel fighters find themselves with little except a fervent belief in their cause. This can be dangerous, as we know. When a man believes his cause is just and righteous, he may seek to accomplish it by any means necessary. This is the heart of the idea
that the ends justify the means. If he believes that looting, killing innocents, and blowing up hospitals is required to win the war for his cause, he will do it. While this behavior illustrates the potentially volatile and dangerous side of guerrilla motivation, there does exist a practical application to it. Combat itself is largely a mind game, and the winner of a battle or skirmish is not strictly determined by the number of casualties inflicted by one side or another. In fact, most combat is won by causing a rout, or scaring the enemy into a retreat. This can be done through superior discipline and firepower, or through an overwhelming advantage (Galula & Nagl, 2006). Guerilla leaders know this and understand that the more fervent a man is in his convictions, the less likely he is to break under fire and run for his life. These leaders put the cause above all else, and care not for individualism in combat.

Another strength which guerrillas frequently use to their advantage is their seemingly endless cunning. No matter how outnumbered and outgunned one may find himself, the most powerful weapon in his arsenal will always be his mind. This is precisely how farmers and peasants can win conflicts with professional soldiers. Not through superior equipment, but through superior tactics and shrewd maneuvers. A squad of conventional soldiers are a force to be reckoned with when executing the missions they are trained for, but will fall to rifle fire like any other men. No amount of training, discipline, or hi-tech uniforms can protect against something as effective and decimating as an ambush. Guerrillas take heart in the fact that they recognize their enemies as mere men, and not some indomitable force to be reckoned with. By recognizing this fact, they acknowledge that their enemies are prone to human error, and all the technological advantage in the world does not give them true power over their fellow man. In this way, guerrilla fighters and leaders alike fight and create plans with the idea that their enemies, however powerful they may be, are still flesh and blood. They follow a clearly written doctrine of their own making and are predictable in their ways. This is what
so often gives the unconventional actor power over his state counterpart and allows him to grasp victory from what almost seems to be certain defeat.

Conventional Soldier Perspective

The conventional soldier fighting on the behalf of the state does not have the same motivation or priorities as his unconventional counterpart, nor should he be expected to. He is, after all, the product of a very standardized form of professional military training designed to encourage both effective teamwork and cohesiveness under all circumstances. The type of professional soldier fielded by most developed nations excels in very specific types of warfare, most notably the realms of conventional warfare. But these types of warfare and the doctrines by which they operate are both narrow in scope and versatility (Paret, Craig & Gilbert, 1986). Only the best and brightest of conventional soldiers are considered for training that involves autonomous decision making and unconventional tactics. These soldiers include much of the special operations units fielded by developed nations, and it is often these warriors who are considered the most well-rounded of their nation’s military stock. Ordinary soldiers of developed conventional states around the world receive the same routine training in small unit tactics and discipline under fire, and while this makes them effective at accomplishing missions that fit their training, they are left wanting when asked to act decisively and with a great deal of autonomy (Kilcullen, 2010). This disadvantage is frequently used to their detriment when in combat with unconventional fighters that do not act within the parameters of the assigned mission or refuse to fit into any predetermined tactical mold.

One factor that almost certainly plays a part in the role of the conventional soldier is the motivation for fighting in the first place. While the unconventional guerrilla fighter may fight for a myriad of reasons including religion, ethnicity, or ideological cause, the conventional soldier must acknowledge exactly what he fights for, or at least claims to fight
for, when he volunteers or is conscripted into his armed forces. This means acknowledging the supremacy of his nation, his government, and to some degree, his way of life. When a recruit in a conventional military joins his nation's armed forces, he is swearing to defend the principles and fundamental rights that his government holds dear. This is easily justified in some cases, and not as easily justified in others. In the present day, few can contend that it is an easy proposition to truly convince an American military recruit that he is fighting for the purpose of spreading freedom and democracy. More often than not, soldiers in places like Iraq and Afghanistan find themselves believing that they are fighting for little more than what I would term as “glory and gold.” This is the idea that the conventional soldier today, not just in the United States, but in many developed nations, not only realizes but accepts that he does not fight for the core beliefs and principles of his country, but rather a steady paycheck and the prestige that comes from a record of military service. Many veterans of the US military see this as the summation of their service, and while many veterans of the last several conflicts in the Middle East would contend that the cause they fought for was just, all would agree that they were afforded a fair salary and the post-service benefits of being a military veteran in the United States (Smith, 2007). While this fact does not necessarily diminish the fighting ability of conventional troops, it certainly puts their mission into perspective. Unless their time as soldiers is spent defending their homes, families, or communities, they will never feel the same sense of zeal that many guerrilla fighters feel when they have absolutely nothing to lose in defense of their homes.

Endstate: The Coming Fifth Generation

The fifth generation of warfare, by my analysis, will not be reflective of any one prior generation of warfare. Rather, it will incorporate many separate elements of previous generations while simultaneously shifting the nature of warfare to accommodate technological advancements. The creation of a new generation of warfare requires the
concurrent development of three essential factors: new technology, new theory, and new ways to define combatants in the new generation. New technology is an essential step in the emergence of a new generation of warfare, as it allows for new developments in military hardware to render obsolete the developments of the past that had dominated prior. The development of new theory goes hand in hand with technological development, as new technology and new machines of war can make no difference on the battlefield if one lacks the skill or knowledge to use them effectively. This involves the application of a new, innovative military theory that finds ways to counter traditionally successfully tactics used in the past generation. Finally, the last important, but perhaps not necessary development in the fifth generation of warfare will revolve around one question: what does it mean to be a combatant in the fifth generation? This is where even simple questions of warfare such as the identification of friend and foe are made obscure and vague in the eyes of combatants. With the onset of the fourth generation, the lines between soldiers and civilians became blurred, and since that time more developments within warfare have led to the end of uniforms being used by unconventional forces almost completely, apart from small identifying markers like armbands or the like. This trend will not end with the fourth generation. The fifth generation of warfare will come to carry this trend forward into the future, and may even make greater strides in regards to what is considered a proper battlefield uniform for both state and non-state actors.

Ultimately, I would contend that the fifth generation of warfare will see an inevitable decline in both the frequency and effectiveness of guerrilla tactics and non-state actors operating on the international stage. The tactics and technology developed by sovereign states will prove too much to bear when stacked against the increasing obsolescence of the unconventional actor and will lead to a natural decline in guerrilla and terrorist movements around the world. After having lost their monopoly on the use of force for nearly a century,
The great and regional powers of the world will attempt to undo what their predecessors have done and strike their unconventional opponents down in order to reestablish the supremacy of the state for the coming future. This process will not happen in a matter of days, however. The introduction and establishment of a new generation of warfare is something that is not fully complete until it has been tested and proven in the heat of combat, as all past generations have. Much of the technology to eradicate unconventional tactics and render them ineffective already exists, it just has not seen proper deployment and tactical usage. This requires hundreds of experiences in the field with the aforementioned equipment, and must happen within time over the course of one or several conflicts. Already there have been great leaps made in the fight against unconventional fighters and non-state actors, but this progress has come at the cost of years of misplaced funding and resources towards an outdated mode of conflict. Once states realize this and realize that no true competition or rivalry may emerge amongst themselves while there are still challenges to their legitimacy and sovereignty. While non-state actors and guerrilla organizations lurk in the dark corners of the world, there will never be complete undisputed domination on the part of the state (Kilcullen, 2013).

**Policy Recommendations for States**

As a citizen of a sovereign state, one would feel inclined to take the side of order and support the supremacy and dominion of the state as the sole legitimate force on the international stage. Better to side with an orderly and regulated form of warfare practiced by legally recognized states than the brutish barbarity that has proven far too common in warfare involving non-state actors with no code or creed. Because of this, I will only offer policy recommendations regarding the implementation and development of fifth generational warfare to conventional states, and not to non-state actors. These recommendations are meant to serve as loose guidelines that will help further encourage the adoption of new fifth
generational tactics in order to give state the edge they need to win conflicts against non-state actors practicing unconventional tactics.

One of the first things that states need to recognize regarding the adoption of new theories and styles of warfare is that this process is not an instantaneous one, and will not always yield the result expected. This does not mean, however, that the new generation of warfare is not approaching, but rather that it must be solidified in common military discourse through a system of trial and error. In the initial phases of implementation, resources dedicated to outdated developments of third generational conventional warfare should be reassigned and fully devoted to the development of technology designed for use in an unconventional environment or combat zone. This means decreasing funding for wildly expensive projects like the development of advanced main battle tanks, multirole fighters, and nuclear-powered aircraft carriers in favor of a renewed focus on infantry combat systems, autonomous weapons systems, surveillance instruments and other intelligence gathering devices, and exoskeleton prototypes. More time and funding dedicated to developing these technologies will help to undermine the effectiveness of non-state actors and increase the battlefield advantages that states have in their conflicts involving unconventional fighters. States today must realize that while the development of conventional weapons for potential state-to-state conflict remains important, steps must be taken to ensure that non-state actors do not rise to a level of legitimacy where they are treated as equals of the state. This is and should be the greatest fear of the state. Once states around the world begin to recognize and negotiate with non-state actors, they doom themselves by acknowledging the very groups that seek the downfall of their governments and want for nothing more than control of the state themselves. This threat is an existential one, and should be held in the same importance as threats from outside sovereign states.
The military theory behind fifth generational warfare must be developed and implemented in conjunction with the technological developments a new generation brings. This new stage of military theory implores conventional armies to reorganize themselves in order to better combat unconventional threats. This would likely involve a shift towards smaller, highly mobile, highly lethal strike forces to quickly assault guerrilla positions or bases and instill a large degree of psychological uncertainty amongst enemy ranks. These strike forces should be cleared to operate with a great deal of autonomy, and be armed with innovative equipment that negates the possibility of the unit ever being overcome by unconventional forces. This requires the use of experimental rapid extraction vehicles, computerized autonomous weapons systems, and personal infantry defense systems that can turn one conventional soldier into a de facto juggernaut on the battlefield, impervious to any amount of unconventional tactics or deceptive maneuvers.

The final step to realizing the onset and development of the fifth generation of warfare is mastery of the prior fourth generation. Many states already possess the knowledge to ensure this, but still fail to properly exercise these tactics outside the missions of select special operations units. Units such as the Green Berets, Navy SEALs, and British Special Air Service are all masters of every style of unconventional warfare and have used this knowledge to great effect against the enemies of their states (Keegan, 2003). But true mastery of the fourth generation requires units at all levels of the military hierarchy to participate and remain comfortable practicing unconventional warfare. This is the key to denying non-state actors and other unconventional organizations their power; by mastering the game guerrillas seek to play, a state can effectively counter and destroy their opposition without wasting time or resources on developments that present little to no threat to non-state actors (Kilcullen, 2013).
Conclusion

The coming of the fifth generation is a natural and necessary process in the further development of how mankind chooses to conduct itself during times of conflict. Over the course of the next several decades, humanity will answer several essential questions regarding the future of warfare on Earth. Firstly, states must ask themselves the question of who exactly will matter for the future battlefield. With the advent of new technology incorporating the use of things like artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons software, the expectation that war will solely be a conflict between men no longer remains a certainty. The next several years could see the introduction of independently-minded machines designed for use in war, and this adds to the complexity and ethical viability of the fifth generation of warfare as a whole. Should the world stand by and allow living, breathing men to be killed by cold, emotionless machines? This is not a question that demands an answer in this thesis, at least not yet. As of now, war remains a contest between people, and every casualty inflicted by one side or another can be traced back to a decision made by a living human. This will remain the status quo until such a time comes where AI-directed machines usurp the supremacy of actual humans in combat.

The fifth generation may also see the introduction of entirely new realms of warfare. Just as the second generation of warfare saw the introduction of the skies as a new realm of warfare, so too may cyberspace become yet another way that humans conduct war. The development and rapid expansion of the internet and computer technology, along with the computerization of the entire developed world, has led to the emergence of cyberspace as an entirely new realm by which states and non-state actors alike may pose significant threats. It is currently unknown exactly how large a role cyberspace will play in future conflicts, but if sovereign states continue to digitalize their satellite, ballistic missile, and defense networks, it can be safely assumed that cyberspace and the resulting field of cyberwarfare will continue to
play a significant role in the strategic plans of states for many years to come. The introduction of cyberspace as a new realm of warfare raises many questions about the priorities of states as well as non-state actors when it comes to the strategic opportunity presented by the internet. Already non-state actors have used online resources to recruit new members, sell things to fund their organization, and purchase hardware that would otherwise take an untenable amount of resources and effort. States must look to cyberspace as an important realm to win early victories in the long fight against non-state actors. If states can secure an early hold and begin to set tactical precedents in the realm of cyberspace, they will further deny non-state actors an opportunity to use technological advancements to advance their own agendas.

Another final realm in which warfare may expand to in the coming fifth generation is the realm of space. The thought of warfare in the stars has long been but a pipe dream of the great powers of the world, but with the creation of the United States Space Force, the race to establish strategic supremacy in space has begun. Of all the nations in the world that possess nuclear weapons, every one of them has the potential to send men and women into orbit and beyond, given enough time and resources. This kind of situation is potentially dangerous, as no conflict can be restricted to any one strategic realm and oftentimes bleeds over into other realms of warfare. It would be hard to imagine that a conflict would rage in space while the nations of earth remained content to restrict their actions to that sole realm. No matter how limited the conflict, states will seek to maximize their advantage through the use of naval, air, and ground power, and will seldom restrict their options in almost any war.

Whatever the future of warfare may be, and whatever the fifth generation of warfare will entail, it will yield some of the greatest technological marvels and advancements the world has ever seen. It will challenge the international status quo, and the idea of what it means to be both part of and a citizen of a sovereign state in the 21st century. With the rate at
which the world is currently globalizing and growing smaller, independent states must act soon in order to establish themselves as the sole inheritors of power and legitimacy on Earth. If the globalization of the world’s many states becomes the normative state of affairs and non-state actors are granted legitimacy, it will mean the end of all forms of lawful and civilized conflict as we know it. This is why, in the next generation of warfare, the sovereign state must prevail as the sole independent actor so as to maintain the greater peace and world order for decades to come.
Bibliography


