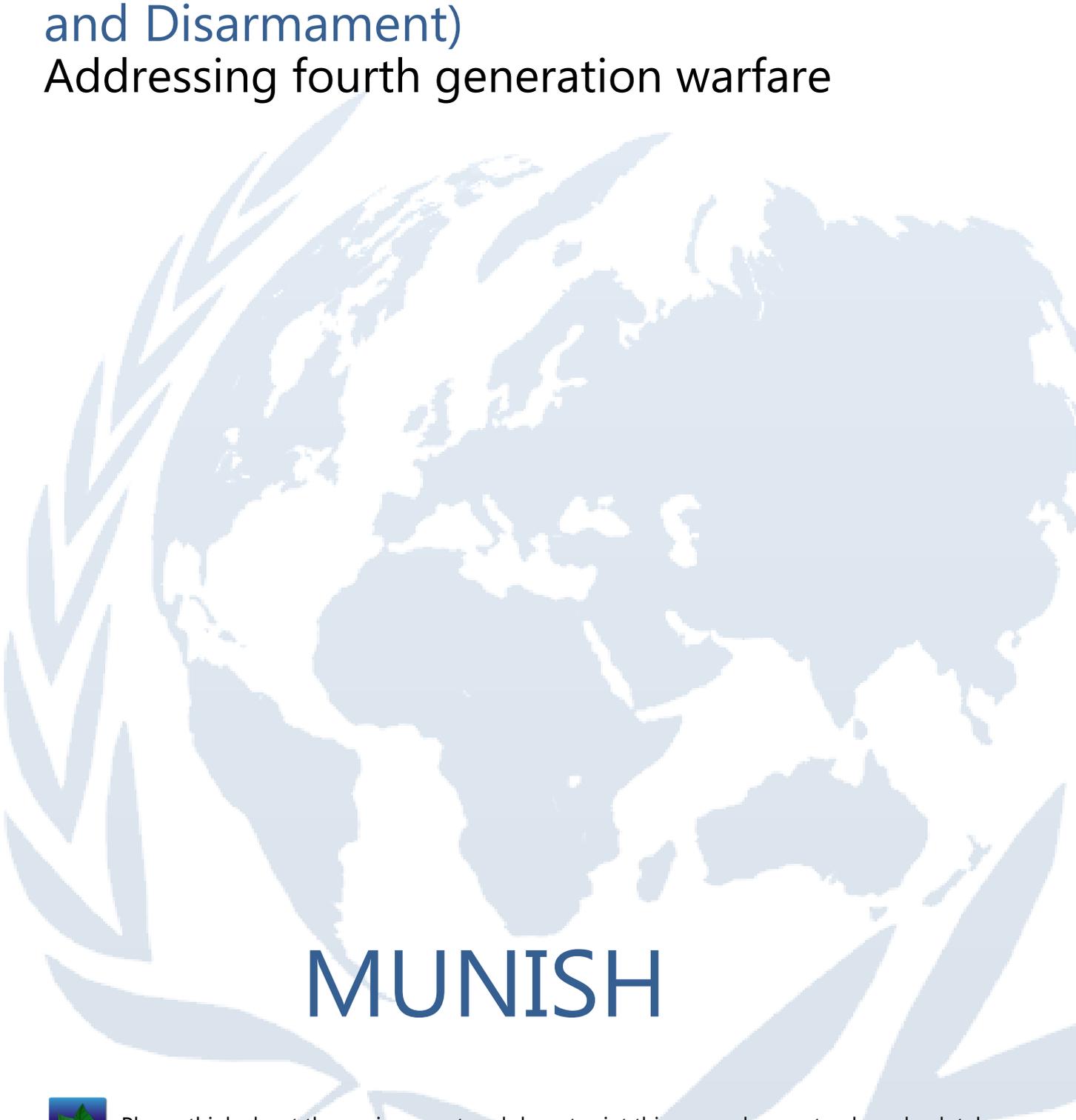


# Research Report

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General Assembly  
First Committee (International Security  
and Disarmament)  
Addressing fourth generation warfare



# MUNISH



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<b>Forum</b>	GA1: International Security and Disarmament
<b>Issue:</b>	Addressing fourth generation warfare
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<b>Position:</b>	Chair

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## Introduction

Modern warfare started with the end of the Thirty Years War, according to William S. Lind. Since then warfare has of course further evolved but it's not always possible to say it improved, it only changed. Fourth generation warfare is the newest type which actually also includes elements seen in period of the Roman Empire but adapted to the present day conditions and possibilities. The cause for fourth generation warfare lies in violent non-state actors playing an important role in the conflicts. This however means that this new type of warfare is not only based on states and can therefore not be controlled or be bound to certain limits by means such as treaties.

Until today, states fighting against violent non-state actors struggle to dominate the conflict and are likely to lose or at least take greave casualties. Fourth generation warfare therefore should be addressed in the UN in order to find an international solution on how to compete against fourth generation warfare as states should not lose their power to non-state actors, especially as it might cause a chain reaction or motivate other violent non-state actors to fight. But states should also be made aware of how to reduce the risk of fourth generation warfare in their own country. As there are several fourth generation warfare conflicts going on at the moment, and it's not unlikely that it will spread even more over the coming years, it's a very urgent and crucial matter.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Fourth generation warfare

The term fourth generation warfare (4GW) is not internationally defined; however, it usually refers to conflicts where the major participants are not only states but also violent non-state actors. Its origin can be found during the Cold War, when the conflict states were



not able to use direct force and instead tried to use smaller entities, civilians or local groups to hurt the enemy state by manipulating the civilians. Such conflicts are often decentralized and have a smaller physical and geographical impacts but therefore much higher cultural and moral impacts. These non-state actors can be organized groups or individuals fighting for the same cause. The 4GW includes elements such as terrorism, guerilla warfare, psychological warfare, manipulation and low-intensity conflicts.

### **Terrorism**

There is no internationally recognized definition of terrorism yet, which is why many states have different definitions, but it basically describes the use of violence and threats to create fear and chaos, often for political or religious goals. The goal of the terrorists is mostly to send a message and change governmental structures but sometimes they also just want to attack or criticise certain cultures.

### **Psychological warfare**

Psychological warfare refers to an aspect of a war or conflict, where one side tries to change the moral attitude, beliefs, behavior, emotions and thoughts mainly by the use of media. Everything can be the target of psychological warfare, states as well as individuals, but they also may use psychological warfare themselves. It can also be used in non-conflict situations in order to achieve certain political or economic changes or advantages and can therefore be used not only by states but also by individuals or non-state actors. This is why psychological warfare is often very subtle and cannot be recognized as war. The goals of psychological warfare can be very different; it may be used to lower the enemy's moral and motivation but also to influence elections.

### **Guerilla warfare**

The term is used for conflicts in which small groups of irregular forces, which may include military forces as well as normal civilians, use hit-and-run tactics to win against a larger, less mobile army with regular soldiers that occupy their territory. These groups can be part of a greater organization or act individually. They often use the element of surprise to ambush the enemies in order to inflict great damage but retreat fast to lessen their own casualties. If done right, it is a very effective tactic against big military forces but often leads to great losses.



## Non-state actors

Non-state actors (NSA) are groups and organization that are big and strong enough to have an influence in world politics and cause changes. They do not belong to any state though they may work together. Examples for NSAs are NGOs, religious groups, multinational corporations as well as violent non-state actors (VNSA). VNSAs play a crucial role in the 4GW. They use illegal violence, such as terrorism, to reach their goals. But VNSAs should not only be seen as terrorist groups, they can also be warlords, gangs or militias.

## Low-intensity conflicts

Low-intensity conflicts (LIC) describe conflicts in which military forces are selectively used and have certain restrictions. It includes objectives such as peacekeeping, antiterrorism as well as assistance to other countries. Because of these restrictions LICs cause less casualties and destruction than a war. LICs can include 4GW as sometimes state forces fight against (violent) NSAs.

## Center of Gravity

The center of gravity (CoG) was first used by a Prussian military officer and is described as the element, object or ideology which provides the physical and mental strength to fight for one's goals. The US military tries to reduce all aspects to one CoG and has defined the friendly CoG as the element which motivates the own people to fight whereas the enemy CoG is the obstacle which is in the way of army achieving its objective.

## General Overview

### What is fourth generation warfare?

The term fourth generation warfare (4GW) was first used in an article of the Marine Corps Gazette from 1989. One of the most important co-authors was William S. Lind, an American expert on military affairs. He previously had established the ideas of first, second and third generation warfare in the 1980s. It shows how modern warfare has changed since its beginning in 1648. This theory has not been internationally accepted and there is some criticism but in order to debate about it, the idea of William S. Lind should be used as the base of any definition. As stated in the definition (see above) 4GW refers to conflicts which involve violent non-state actors as well as a state. It is a product of rising cultural conflicts and globalization. Some people can't identify themselves anymore with their country. These



people come together and create groups which can grow and turn violent. Their goal can be very different, but mostly it is to change the government or overthrow them completely, or sometimes even to reach independence of a certain area. Another origin for 4GW are also destroyed states, for example Iraq which was defeated but then left destroyed which was the perfect soil for VNSAs to achieve enough power and influence.

Violent non-state actors however generally do not impose their rule right away but try to create disorder and chaos in the country where the conflict takes place first. Once they have achieved this they would continue pursuing their original goals. The basic concept behind 4GW is the idea of reaching the goal by attacking the culture of the enemy and to weaken the enemy's society and their mentality, not to attack the enemy's forces and cause deaths. This is only an instrument to create disorder and chaos and the reason why VNSAs sometimes use terrorism instead of attacking the enemy's forces directly. There are theories about 4GW between two or more states. As 4GW does not include the direct conflict of two armies this would most likely refer to cyber and psychological warfare or the support of VNSAs against the enemy. However, this is has not been an issue yet and is of less importance.

### **The three levels of 4GW and further characteristics**

The tactics and characteristics of 4GW can be described with three levels. The first level is the physical one. It includes firepower and direct combat. In this level, state forces would normally dominate simply because they have better equipment, have had a military training and in most cases have a larger size. Nonetheless inflict VNSAs great damage by sabotages, ambushes and guerilla warfare because most armies still haven't adapted themselves to 4GW. For example most armies are still used to 2GW, meaning order, discipline and no innovation or unprepared, sudden tactical changes. VNSAs are aware of these weaknesses and exploit them. Even though the first level causes the most deaths it is the least important one for the development of the conflict and the characteristic of the 4GW.

The second level is the mental or motivational level. This level is very crucial as it is the start and end of a conflict. The center of gravity can vary very much in 4GW but it usually is based on religion, culture or nationalism. But there are also some VNSAs, such as terrorists or guerilla soldiers, which lack a specific and shared center of gravity as they may fight against the same enemy but for a different purpose. This makes it hard for the country in which the conflict takes place or the states which fight the VNSAs to win the conflict because normally such a conflict can be won by destroying or weakening the CoG. But when there are several or no center of gravity or the center of gravity is the presence of the

enemy's army, it is almost impossible to win the conflict without retreating or adapting to 4GW, which unfortunately hasn't happened in 4GW conflicts yet. Killing or capturing the leader of the VNSAs is also less effective than in previous generations of warfare, because many VNSAs lack a hierarchy, sometimes consisting of several groups and even if there is a leader, the lines are getting thinner. For example did Osama bin-Laden live in a cave for a long time even though he was wealthy. This was of course also for security reason but it also made him a true leader, living like his followers and integrated him. Other organizations have even less important leaders which can easily be replaced as long as the CoG stays alive.

The third and last level is based around the moral and cultural values of the participants and is probably the most important one for the conflict itself. As previously stated, 4GW is all about attacking or criticizing certain cultures or governments. If they attack these cultural norms, a whole nation and its civilians can be criticized, attacked and hurt, whereas casualties of an army are often only numbers to most of the civilians. It is far more effective and without the use of violence can even be legal. An example for this is Ghandi (though it wasn't 4GW) who had a strong CoG and was able to make people follow him. While they were peaceful, the state, in this case the British Empire, became violent but at the same time lost a lot of support by their own civilians as well as the world community as they attacked peaceful protestors.

As seen in the example, 4GW describes no ordinary conflict and every 4GW conflict can be very different, as the CoG as well as the use of the three levels can vary. However, typically the enemy is a violent NSA and uses all of the three levels. The enemy doesn't necessarily have to be one organization or group but can consist of many small groups, whether they have alliances or help each other just because they have similar views on the matter. Hence a 4GW conflict is very decentralized, which is an extra obstacle to more centralized 2GW armies. The NSAs are more mobile and harder to locate in comparison to the military state forces. They are forced to attack the enemy from the rear and achieve a lot of destruction with little firepower. This not only allows them the previously stated tactics such as ambushes and guerilla tactics, but also to endure longer and possibly keep the conflict going until the enemy retracts because of limited success and high losses. Generally, a 4GW conflict is very similar to a low-intensity conflict and guerilla war and also has evolved out of such conflicts with the addition of modern technology which is especially important for cyber and psychological warfare.

A long lasting and still present example is the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the name of several operations of the US army as part of their global war on terror. They fight against VNSAs such as the Taliban in the OEF-Afghanistan, to enforce order, peace and



freedom but also to fight terrorist organization such as Al-Qaeda. But there were also many other examples, many being part of the Operation Enduring Freedom and the global war on terror. Terrorism is not the same as fourth generation warfare, but terrorist organizations often fight 4GW while focusing on the element of terrorism.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### United States of America

The United States of America does not particularly have a specific role in addressing 4GW, however, they are one of the few states that have encountered, and still do, fourth generation warfare but also seem to lose the conflicts because they can't get the control of the conflict areas. With the Operation Enduring Freedom in several areas around the world, as well as the global war on terror, the USA try to solve several conflicts, most of which were created by (violent) non-state actors. The American tactics unfortunately do not seem to work very efficiently against VNSA which use tactics of 4GW but have also not yet really tried to adapt or change their tactics in a way which can compete against 4GW. The US military should try new solutions and strategies, debated by the UN, which hopefully will end their operations more quickly with fewer deaths. The other nations around the world on the other hand, should learn from the US but also other nations facing similar problems which is why it is very important for the US to share their experience as detailed as possible.

## Possible Solutions

As stated in the introduction, the matter is very urgent and should be solved as quickly as possible. However, the term fourth generation warfare has still not been defined yet by the international community and is only an idea how to describe this kind of warfare. A definition to the term, or using another term that has a clear definition, should be the first step in order to address 4GW and tackle specific issues. Fourth generation warfare can be very adaptable and flexible and long term solutions might fail, thus should these conflict be tackled with great care and short term solutions and each step should be evaluated in order to find good long term solutions. Because VNSAs might adapt to those solutions unexpectedly, states should always have several solutions in mind and backup plans in case it might be necessary. As every 4GW conflict is different, each conflict should have its own specific solutions which can't be debated on this topic but certain guidelines might be very



useful for states facing such conflicts. In 2004 William S. Lind presented some possible ideas and solution on how the US should fight 4GW, which he had worked out with some marines and other high ranked officers, and which might be very useful also for other nations besides the US:

- “If America had some Third Generation ground forces, capable of maneuver warfare, we might be able to fight battles of encirclement. The inability to fight battles of encirclement is what led to the failure of Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan, where al Qaeda stood, fought us, and got away with few casualties. To fight such battles we need some true light infantry, infantry that can move farther and faster on its feet than the enemy, has a full tactical repertoire [...] and can fight with its own weapons instead of depending on supporting arms. [...]
- Fourth Generation opponents will not sign up to the Geneva Conventions, but might be open to a chivalric code governing how our war with them would be fought. It's worth exploring. [...]
- What the Marine Corps calls "cultural intelligence" is of vital importance in 4GW, and it must go down to the lowest rank. In Iraq, the Marines seemed to grasp this much better than the U.S. Army.
- What kind of people do we need in Special Operations Forces? The seminar thought minds were more important than muscles, but it is not clear all U.S. SOF understand this.
- One key to success is integrating our troops as much as possible with the local people.
- [...] There are two ways to deal with the issue of force protection. One way is the way we are currently doing it, which is to separate ourselves from the population and to intimidate them with our firepower. A more viable alternative might be to take the opposite approach and integrate with the community. That way you find out more of what is going on and the population protects you. [...]
- What "wins" at the tactical and physical levels may lose at the operational, strategic, mental and moral levels, where 4GW is decided. Martin van Creveld argues that one reason the British have not lost in Northern Ireland is that the British Army has taken more casualties than it has inflicted. This is something the Second Generation American military has great trouble grasping, because it defines success in terms of comparative attrition rates. [...]
- We must recognize that in 4GW situations, we are the weaker, not the stronger party, despite all our firepower and technology.

- In the Axis occupation of the Balkans during World War II, the Italians in many ways were more effective than the Germans. The key to their success is that they did not want to fight. [...] What lessons can U.S. forces draw from this? [...]
- When we have a coalition, what if we let each country do what it does best, e.g., the Russians handle operational art, the U.S. firepower and logistics, maybe the Italians the occupation?"<sup>1</sup>

Some of these solutions might prove more important and successful than others. For example, it would probably be very hard to create coalitions which would fight against the same enemy, as not every state would want to join the fight or is attacked by the threat. But it is more important to get the ideas behind these possible solutions, which are that state forces have to be fully aware of 4GW, should adapt to it and learn from the experiences of other forces which have experiences in some of the fields.

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## Appendix

- I. "Selil." *Selil RSS*. Web. 24 June 2013. <http://selil.com/archives/535>

On this website the author talks about the theory of 4GW and his attempts to create a model which would display the structural differences but also links between the different generations of warfare. He also references to previous models he established. These models might be very useful for the understanding of the issue, however the models itself are not particularly easy to understand.