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**Pakistan (Counter Terrorism Operations)
in the Context of Fourth Generation Warfare:
Challenges and Opportunities**



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PAKISTAN (COUNTER TERRORISM OPERATIONS) IN THE CONTEXT OF FOURTH GENERATION WARFARE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

Understanding the type of war you are fighting is the first step to winning.¹

General Anthony Zinni, USMC ®, Former CENTCOM Commander.

In the study of international relations, every phenomenon requires a relevant paradigm for its explanation which further helps in designing a suitable course of action to deal with it.² The 21st Century witnessed a new kind of warfare which many states are ill-prepared to fight and win due to lack of appropriate knowledge and skills. According to war theorists all over the world, the history of warfare has entered into a new generation where an “evolved form of insurgency uses all available networks – political, economic, social, and military – to convince the enemy’s decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.”³ This new era of war is named “Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW).”⁴

The evolution of warfare into its present form is facilitated and compelled by the changing landscape of international political system and new trends of globalization which have diluted state powers and the notion of “nation-state” as envisaged in the Treaty of Westphalia since 1648, is eroding in the international relations practices. The international political system is approaching the era of the “end of the nation-state” and relative importance of the nation-state is declining in proportion to the growing importance of the supra-national, sub-national and non-national forces* which are emerging as influential actors in international political

* supra-national organizations such as the United Nations or NATO, sub-national groups, such as private enterprise, criminal and ethnic groups, and Non-national groups, for example non-state aligned terrorist groups and multi-national businesses, both appear in greater relief and grow in actual significance.

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system. As a result, it is witnessed that the ability of nations to control the flow of information, commodities and people is declining, while people are becoming more responsive.⁵

In generational development of warfare, it is seen that First Generation Warfare involved massed manpower and lasted until the machine gun and indirect fire made such tactics suicidal however in the Second Generation Warfare, although massed firepower was the basis but tactics relied on fire and movement, with heavy reliance on indirect fire from artillery. Although it was different, but linear in its evolution. The Third Generation Warfare came with a main focus on maneuvers and real time communications. It was best exemplified by World War II's strategy of "Blitzkrieg" in which the attacks relied on infiltration to bypass, cut off and collapse the enemy's main combat forces rather than seeking to destroy them. But surprisingly, in contrast to shift towards more sophisticated methods of fighting as predicted by the patterns of evolution of warfare in first three generations, the Fourth Generation of Warfare emerged with the modern technology supported by ancient tactics to achieve the desired ends.⁶ As the phenomenon of war, its causes and consequences can not be well understood under idealist school of thought and requires the realist paradigm to analyze the phenomenon in its relevant context. Likewise, Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) renamed as Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO)⁷ needs a theoretical framework for understanding the processes and connecting the loops which have been missed due to inadequate knowledge of the processes operating behind. Moreover, the defeat of major powers by weaker opponents makes it essential to understand this form of warfare and adapt accordingly.⁸

The theory of 4GW holds significant relevance in this regard, as it is seen that there is a drastic change in operations (nature of fighting, tools, techniques) as compared to the past wars, and the militants act as fourth generation warriors who do not aim to win by defeating their enemy's military forces, but by defeating their

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political will. Moreover, the notion of effective war termination (while combating this unique mix of techniques, is a crucial foundation for a successful strategy) in OCO especially in context of Counter-Terrorism Operations (CTO) in Pakistan, resembles with the notion of victory in 4GW. With the gradual evolution in nature and characteristics of warfare, 4GW provides a guideline in shaping an end to armed conflict in appropriate ways that support the attainment of long term political goals which is as important as it is for any other form of use of force (conventional wars).

It is very unfortunate that war termination is a chronically under-studied concept in case of CTO and there is a tendency to see effective counter-insurgency as simply the proper application of military operational and tactical principles. It is because of these fundamental misconceptions in understanding the nature of this war that military success has not been translated in a linear way into political success. In order to address these basic misconceptions which have led to deviations in strategy from success, the paper discusses the characteristics of fourth generation warfare, analyze its relevance to OCO and specifically to CTO in Pakistan by testing it on four parameters (basic characteristics of 4GW) and provides recommendations to transform the strategy in order to defeat a fourth generation warfare opponent. The essay basically aims to reorient the perceptions by looking into facts through the prism of 4GW.

Characteristics - Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW)

In order to understand the premises of the paper, it is necessary to look at the nature and characteristics of 4GW which can be defined as;

"The distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. It will be nonlinear, possibly to the point of having no definable battlefields or fronts. The distinction between 'civilian' and 'military' may disappear."⁹

4GW is a term used by military thinkers to refer to conflicts in the 21st century. It is referred to as the only type of warfare that can defeat major military

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powers.¹⁰ In this regard, it is necessary to study the core features of 4GW in order to study CTO in Pakistan, and identify challenges and opportunities in response mechanism. The core features of 4GW are:

- **Nature of War.** It appears to be a strange kind of warfare in which military force plays a smaller role than in earlier generations and other available networks i.e. political, economic and social are utilized. The main drivers behind 4GW are:
 - Loss of nation-state's monopoly on violence.
 - Rise of cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts after cold war.
 - Globalization.
- **Nature of Enemy.** It directly deals with people and perceptions, more a battle of minds than of steel. With an evolutionary development, warfare has shifted from an industrial age focus on the destruction of the enemy's armed forces to an information age which focuses more on changing the minds.
- **Timelines.** 4GW is characterized by long wars (prevailing over decades), as compared to previous generations where conventional wars were fought for a short duration to win over the enemy.
- **Tools and Tactics.** Terrorism and Low Intensity Conflicts (LICs) are the two most preferred techniques in 4GW because fourth generation warriors do not intend to directly confront the state's armed forces. It is warfare of choice for transnational organizations and non-state actors as they find terrorism comparatively easier tactic to confront militaries who are trained for conventional inter-state war fighting. It should be noted that fourth generation warfare is not terrorism, whereas terrorism only serves as a tool to materialize their agendas.¹¹ The fourth generation warriors do not aim at direct military confrontation and target the civilian population and counter-value targets (state

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infrastructures) to inflict terror. They try to undermine enemy's strengths and exploit its weaknesses to their advantage.¹² They use asymmetric operations with weapons and techniques that differ substantially from opponents. This strategic asymmetry of acting, organizing and thinking differently than opponent helps them to maximize advantages.¹³

Pakistan (CTO) in the Context of 4GW: Verifying on Four Parameters

The phenomenon of CTO in Pakistan can be best analyzed under the prism of 4GW. After seven years of constant fighting, the insurgency is not crushed from its roots. Initially, it was because Pakistan's armed forces were not trained for asymmetric operations and this was sometimes a genuine excuse for losing at tactical level. But with the passage of time, as armed forces were acquainted with the terrain and acquired tactical skills for fighting counter-insurgency, and there were victories at tactical level, still there were insignificant improvements in the outcomes at the strategic level. It was because of structural flaws in policy formulation at the strategic level as the nature of confrontation was ill-conceived, and the response was hastily planned, poorly carried out with no tangible and long term objectives. As a result, the military expedition has proved expensive without succeeding to nip the militancy and extremism in the bud.¹⁴ There is a need to understand that who wins at the tactical level may lose at the strategic, operational and moral levels, where 4GW is decided.

In order to achieve success at strategic, operational and moral levels, there is a need to understand the phenomenon and analyze how the CTO in Pakistan fits into the framework of 4GW. In addition to four major characteristics, the three constructs of 4GW and their relevance with OCO is also elaborated as follows:-

- In 4GW, the states no longer have a monopoly on war. In GWOT, it is relevant as all the three direct stakeholders in OCO (U.S, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) are at war with non-state actors.

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- OCO like 4GW is marked by a return to a world of cultures and ideologies. It is not a war just between two states with conventional armies. The enemy's hatred emanate from a strong ideological base. The militants in this war also believe in "An Islamic Ideology" and are fighting for ideological victory instead of political or economic goals only.
- Internal division along ethnic and religious lines and special interests within one's own society can be the cause of a fourth generation war and provide a space for exploitation. This also holds true for CTO in Pakistan, where the deprived community of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), isolated from mainstream nation, is used as a weapon through indoctrination.

In order to study the relevance of 4GW in case of CTO in Pakistan, it is helpful to analyze the basic features of CTO in the context of four main characteristics of 4GW (which have been discussed already) in order to analyze whether CTO fits into the criterion of 4GW. The detail of the analysis on four basic parameters is as follows:-

- **Nature of War.**
 - With an evolutionary development, the nature of warfare has entered into a new (phase) generation as compared to the wars fought in the last three generations. Sun Tzu's 2,300 year-old "Art of War" is more applicable which refers to war as a conflict which occurs throughout all aspects of life and the art of war is how to conquer without aggression: subduing the other's military without battle is the most skillful. In war, although aggression is inevitable and this conflict is no different but the skills for fighting this war need to be different than the skills used for conventional wars. The CTO in Pakistan fits into 4GW framework as it is a

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multidimensional problem ranging from targeted acts of terror to mass acts of terror so there is a need for a comprehensive approach to address the issue at all fronts. The challenge confronting the world, particularly the U.S today, is at once less than a full-fledged clash of civilizations and more than war on terrorism.

- The facts on ground suggest that it is not simply terrorism for political or economic gains but has a strong ideology of *Qutubism** behind it. The West is at war with a new totalitarianism for which terrorism is one technique or tactic among many and at the operational and theater level, counterinsurgency is a more relevant paradigm than counterterrorism. Although much has been done by Pakistan's armed forces, but still the "combat terrorism" specific training courses and skill perfection is not comparable to their expertise in fighting conventional wars, as they have been tuned to fight conventionally since the establishment of armed forces.
- In such a war, where besides military operations, suicide bombing, attack on counter-value targets, and indoctrination of youth are used as preferred modes of fighting, military should not be the only means to fight. This is evident from almost nine years

* The roots of modern terrorism can be traced back to the work of Syed Qutub of Egypt. The final form of Qutub's thoughts encompasses his radical anti-secular and anti-western approach based on his interpretations of Quran and Islamic History. He argued that the Muslim world has ceased to exist and reverted back to pre-Islamic ignorance known as *Jahilyyah*, because of the lack of Sharia law. He believed that Muslims should resist any system where men are in servitude to other men. He argued that obeying other men is un-Islamic and a violation of God's sovereignty over all of creation. The only way to bring about freedom from this slavery is to fight *Jahilyyah* with a twofold approach: preaching Islam and abolishing the organizations and authorities (governments) of the *Jahili* system by physical power and *Jihad*. He believed that in this fight, it is permissible to kill the Muslims even, who are supportive to the *Jahili* system and hurdle the *Jihad*.

Source: Dale C. Eikmeier, "Qutubism: An Ideology of Islamic Fascism", Religious Studies Collection, Vol. 37, 2007. Available at, <http://www.questia.com>, Retrieved on, 29th December, 2009.

of continuous military action in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has killed fewer terrorists and has created more. It is the result of misconceptions about the nature of war, that despite the international community's full support to Karzai Government, he has not been able to extend his government's writ in Afghanistan (where he has been ruling for nearly the same amount of time) and in case of Pakistan, despite relentless sacrifices of armed forces, the war is being fought on enemy's terms.

➤ **Nature of Enemy.**

- It is necessary to understand that if the problem, (nature of war, enemy, and its motives) is misdiagnosed, a proper solution to the problem can not be designed. There is a need to understand that terrorism is simply a tactic, not an enemy in itself, which requires designing a counter tactic, instead of a strategy to physically kill the terrorists.
- The role of enemy varies in different theatres i.e. military front, ideological front, and suicide bombing. At the military front, there is a need to realize that al Qaeda terrorist network is more than just an organizational entity. The wrong but popular belief prevailing is that if the leadership is decapitated e.g. capture and killing of Bin Laden and his top lieutenants, the organization will collapse. It is not true because it is a distributed and cellular network. Moreover, the following question serves as the driving force to evolve a new strategy, which has been raised by Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld in 2003,
“Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists everyday than the *madrassahs* and radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?”¹⁵

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- Eventually, a strategy which focuses only on the former, without addressing the latter is a losing strategy. In such a situation, coercion or use of force cannot work alone to meet the desired ends. Moreover, at the ideological front, it is a movement inspired by Qutubism¹⁶, which cannot be crushed by crushing/ killing the leaders of Militants. The enemy's hatred is rooted, not in disputes between nations, but in religious fanaticism, tribalism, and historical envy. The miscreants drive their power from the ideology, which they strongly believe in. The most dangerous aspect is that their ideology has taken on a life of its own, independent of Bin Laden and his top lieutenants. Therefore, we need to cut that ideological support, hit them at morale, and demoralize them to crush the movement.
 - In case of suicide bombing, the suicide terrorists can not be deterred or captured before the blast as they kill themselves first before they kill anyone else. In case of tribal areas of Pakistan, 4GW is thriving on a single weakness- lack of socio-economic development in the area. They have no strengths of their own but exploiting vulnerabilities of the state.
- **Timelines.**
- The 4GW can be distinguished from past wars due to a major change in timelines. Any miscalculations in duration of a war can lead to failure to understand the magnitude and cost of it.¹⁷ So there is an immediate need to understand that fourth generation wars are not short wars. Pakistan's armed forces being conventional warriors are tuned to fight short wars with swift clean up operations. All the major wars Pakistan has fought were short in duration and against the same enemy.

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- On the contrary, CTO in Pakistan since its beginning, has been a different experience altogether i.e. timelines, enemy, tactics, theatres and tools. But unfortunately, before entering into this new generation of warfare, there was a little understanding of phenomenon thus leading to a miscalculated response. OCO in Pakistan fulfills the timeline criterion for 4GW because it is seen that after almost nine years, there is no tangible victory witnessed at strategic level (apart from tactical level battle winning) and there is no prediction of it in near future.
- **Tools and Tactics**
 - “On 11 September 2001, the technology of war took a leap in a wholly new direction. Now it was not a matter of bigger, more advanced machinery to increase destructive capability. It was chillingly the opposite. The biggest, most advanced weapon used on September 11 may have been a box cutter. This was a breakthrough into the history of war, where a war was fought not with weapons at all but with the peaceful technology of modern life. Swords were put aside, and our plowshares were turned against us.”¹⁸
 - 4GW uses guerrilla warfare as the preferred tool which operates on the principles of attrition. It means that if the enemy is dormant, then strike the target and withdraw before any heavy fighting begins. On the other hand, if the enemy attacks, try to disperse to avoid any casualties.¹⁹ The most astonishing fact about 4GW is that these tactics can wear down better equipped armies. So there is a need for technology to adapt to situation in order to win over the unconventional tactics.

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- Fourth generation warriors know that modern weapon systems can be easily detected, and being a small force they can not make any significant impact on the conventional armed strength of a nation so they have devised “smart weapons and tools”. Their most lethal weapon is indoctrination and two crucial target audiences are women and youth. Being a battle of hearts and minds, it fulfills the last criterion of 4GW.

Challenges, Opportunities and Recommendations

Winning over 4GW requires coherent, consistent, and patient action that encompasses the full range of political, economic, social and military activities. All of the factors discussed above need to be internalized in strategy formulation to fight this asymmetric warfare, and move in a direction to reach the desired ends through minimizing the costs, paid by armed forces and maximizing contribution of civil institutions. Due to the misconceptions about the nature of war and massive use of force as a last resort to wipe out militants has not only caused major damages to armed forces but it has also destroyed the structure of the old system operating in FATA and traditional handling of the FATA situations via Jirga, peace committees and tribal leaders’ councils that once worked and reported to the powerful office of the federally appointed Political Agents. Some recommendations to reorient the policies are as follows:

- In order to draw a consensus on nature of war, there is a dire need that all the concerned nations sit together; formulate policies based on the evolving nature of the warfare and ground realities in the light of premises of 4GW. When all the stakeholders will understand the true nature of the challenge, they are confronting, the suspicion and lack of trust on each other will be minimized. This will also help to understand that there is no quick fix to the problem.

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- In 4GW, the crisis of legitimacy of state is universal. It means that 4GW can evolve on any country's soil and the ideology of "multiculturalism," is a prime candidate for the home-grown variety of Fourth Generation wars.²⁰ In such a situation, military confrontation is not a solution as the crisis can emerge at anytime again, until it is wiped out at its latent stage. The ideology behind this terrorism campaign can keep the movement alive in its latent form for years, even after the final crushing of militants. The international pressure on Pakistan to "do more" can not be justified in this context as 4GW requires effective instead of massive use of force and this particular leverage can be best utilized.
- On the military front, success against insurgency tactics depends on the ability to pin the enemy down, and inflict heavy casualties that guerrilla warfare always seeks to avoid. The militants are always withdrawing to avoid damages, as per the doctrine of sub-conventional warfare. In such a situation, precision air strikes can be more decisive. Once the Taliban can no longer count on avoiding casualties by hiding from conventional fighting, the war will shift to Pakistan's terms.
- The victory on tactical and theatre levels depends on smart operations rather than hi-tech weapons. To fight such battles, light infantry* is required that can move farther and faster on its feet than the enemy and has a full tactical repertoire (not just bumping into the enemy and calling for fire) and can fight with its own weapons instead of depending on supporting arms. It is estimated that U.S. Marine infantry

* Light infantry consists of soldiers with extensive combat experience, capable of using initiative with best shooting abilities. It possesses greater strategic mobility and ability to execute missions under restrictive terrain and weather that impairs heavy unit's mobility. Light infantry forces typically rely on their ability to operate under restrictive conditions, surprise, and violence of action, training, stealth, field craft, and fitness level of the individual soldier to address their reduced lethality. Source: "British Light Infantry Regiments", Available at, www.lightinfantry.org, Retrieved on 29th January, 2010.

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today has a sustained march rate of 10-15 kilometers per day, which is relatively higher than our soldiers.²¹ It means that the physical sustainability of our soldiers can also be raised to fight effectively because in fighting 4GW, mind and muscle of every individual soldier counts rather than the collective efficiency of a group and weapons.

- In 4GW, intelligence is the key to success to inflict maximum damage. To be successful against a fourth generation warfare opponent, there is a need to transform the intelligence network to shift from high-technology to low-technology solutions; redefine intelligence indicators; increase processing and analysis capabilities; and develop more agile dissemination of information systems.
- Keeping in view the aims of the militants and the tool and tactics used by them, there are lesser chances of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction nexus in Pakistan as its nuclear programme is in safe hands. There is no fear of a nuclear holocaust, and policies can be narrowly focused to combat ambush warfare without any deviations in operational planning.
- As indoctrination is the most lethal weapon used by the miscreants facilitated by social and economic suppression in the region, the crushing military might cannot be the solution to all political and social problems, and a social change via politics is the way to go ahead. Otherwise, the situation will not improve and none in the coalition in OCO will win. The failure of excessive military might has proven that a shift and change in approach is much needed. The time duration factor in 4GW can be exploited positively. As it is a long war fought through low intensity operations, the projects regarding socio-economic uplift of the area can be launched in parallel to military operations as compared

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to conventional warfare which follows the 3Rs mechanism i.e. Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation.

- There is a need to empower the local jirga system and the social, political, economic, educational and industrial reforms must not challenge or threaten the existing systems of the tribal society. Instead of imposing or dictating a change from the above, let the change come from within via these reform. The change should be homegrown, sensitive to local customs and traditions and long-term oriented. The stakes of the locals have to be built into any such process if the reformation effort has to succeed. It is only the Socio-economic uplift of the area, which can turn the chessboard in Pakistan's favor.
- There is a need to significantly increase the level of religio-political literacy to make the most effective use of *Ijtihad* (the battle of interpretations) as counter-jihad²² to fight the war effectively at the ideological front.
- Time in all its manifestations - duration, sequencing, timing, tempo, and also memory- has been the most neglected strategic dimension in strategy formulation. The Guerrilla warfare and low intensity operations being preferred tactics, major damages are lesser at theatre level, although the slow bleeding of fighting assets continues, but it gives opportunity to reorient fighting strategies due to long duration of the war.
- Moreover, there is a need to come out of donor driven agenda to make effective use of time and effort in the light of the fact that notion of security is based on self sufficiency.

Conclusion

Success against a fourth generation opponent depends on the ability of a state to understand and adapt to this type of warfare. Only the clearest possible insight into

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situations, events, players, and their hidden agendas can guide the leaders to decide and act in an appropriate manner which lead to tangible victory. The study reveals that what it means to overcome the enemy in such a war resembles the concept of defeat as crystallized by McChrystal, he said:

“The military definition of defeat is rendering the enemy unable to meet its objectives. It does not mean you eradicate that enemy down to the last individual. It could be similar in politics, where you defeat the other party in an election but you don’t wipe them out.”²³

This concept of defeat needs to be incorporated at the strategic level. As ideology is the strongest element of enemy’s power instead of military power, crushing the enemy on ideological front is as important as success in military operations to ensure victory. Their most powerful weapon of indoctrination can only be defeated through education and awareness in the region. Only massive bombardments over the training camps can not eradicate the problem until an educated youth confronts them and challenge their interpretations of Islam and Sunnah instead of becoming a victim of indoctrination. The most crucial aspect is to cut them at morale and make them revise their timelines- a factor which benefits the fourth generation warriors but depletes a state’s assets.

The fourth generation wars extend over decades and OCO is not different, therefore any haste to win over the enemy through massive use of force will only lead to massive losses. There is a need to be patient in formulating a response mechanism with a focus on non-military means to win. With OCO, world has entered into a new generation of warfare which has its own particular characteristics and therefore requires novel techniques and skills to be countered effectively. A detailed study of characteristics of 4GW and their relevance to CTO in Pakistan suggests that any attempts to use skills acquired through conventional war fighting will lead to failure as it requires a coherent grand strategy to ensure that the

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destruction caused by military actions will be harmonized with the social and economic reforms in the affected areas to achieve the overall objective.

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Notes

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