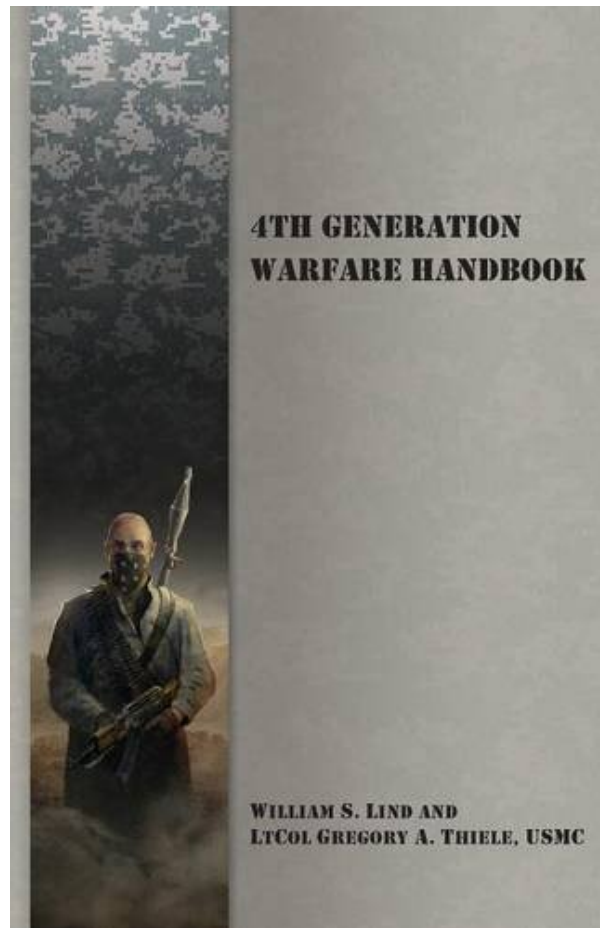
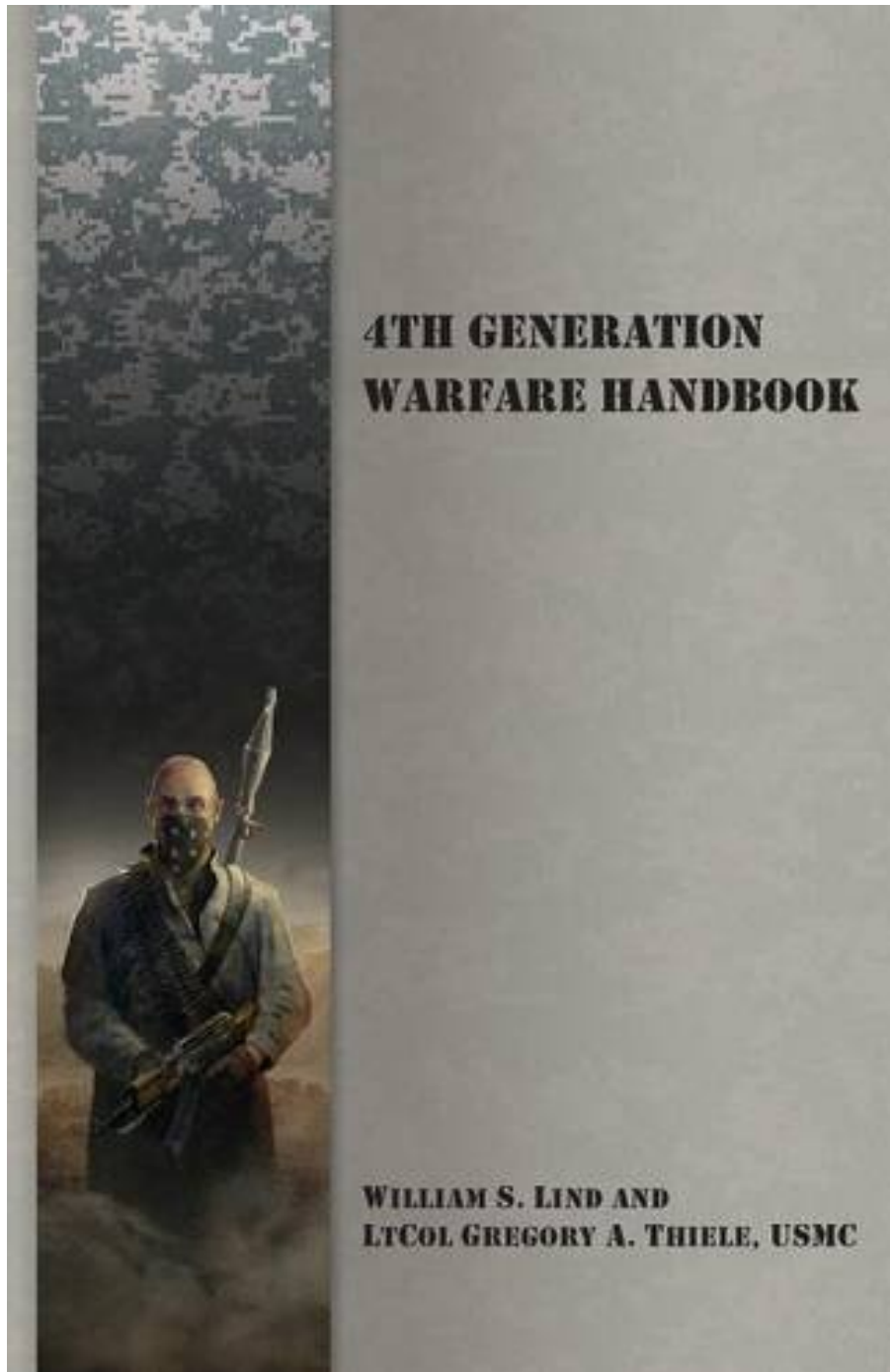


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Written by the author of the Maneuver Warfare Handbook and an active-duty USMC officer with experience in Iraq, 4th Generation Warfare Handbook is the doctrine for a new generation of war. Over the last 40 years, the world has gradually entered into a post-Clausewitzian state where the wars are undeclared, the battlefields can be anywhere, the uniforms are optional, and the combatants as well as the targets are often "civilian". Conventional militaries have repeatedly attempted to utilize technology to meet the new challenges posed, but even the most advanced technology has provided little more than meaningless short-term victories rendered futile in months, if not weeks. This inability of Western governments and militaries to come to terms with the changing nature of modern warfare has led to failed interventions, failed occupations, and now even failed states everywhere from Eastern Europe to Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. And with the recent mass movement of peoples around the world, 4th Generation Warfare can be safely expected to appear in Western Europe and the United States before long. Drawing on their decades of experience with military history and military action, the authors have distilled 4GW theory into a short, concise, easily accessible handbook that provides the soldier, the military analyst, and the civilian observer with a guide to understanding and responding to the changing realities of this challenging new form of war.

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A good start, but lacking details.

By Michael Mcdaniel

Over the last decade, there's been a lot of discussion of 4th Generation warfare. Two schools of thought have formed - one touting 4GW as the latest in modern warfare, the other regarding 4GW as an adaption of classical low-intensity warfare methods to modern communications and propaganda methods. I'm personally an adherent of the latter position, but it doesn't matter.

This book presents useful information on modern low-intensity conflict techniques, but the nuggets are buried in parable-like stories and require sifting to find. But the nuggets are real gold, not fake. The comments about the need to afford an enemy an honorable surrender are particularly true - in retrospect, one of the greatest mistakes of the Iraq campaign in 2003 was the decision to demobilize the Iraqi Army and throw many thousands of trained fighting men onto the street. The observation about the desirability of using bribes is also spot-on.

I think this book has several shortcomings. First, it was written assuming that the reader is thoroughly

conversant with 4GW terminology and arguments. A review of basic concepts would have been welcome. Second, there was very little presented on employment of the assets available to a high-end military in low-intensity conflict. And the intelligence and logistic capabilities that can be brought to bear can be very useful. Finally, I think the material would have been much more useful had it been integrated more fully into something like the classic Small Wars Manual that the U.S. Marine Corps developed prior to the Second World War.

This is a good start, but not the definitive work on the subject.

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

There will be 4GW

By Ashtar Command

This book by conservative columnist William Lind expands on the themes set out in his shorter work "The Four Generations of Modern War". Lind's ideas on modern warfare are similar to those of Israeli military historian Martin van Creveld. The basic perspective is a pessimistic one. The power of the modern state and its military is in decline. For that reason, wars will be fought by a wide variety of non-state actors, including clans, tribes, terrorist groups and crime syndicates. This is similar to the formation of war bands predicted by Toynbee. The process has already begun and will escalate even more in the future. Lind calls the strategy and tactics of the war bands "4th Generation Warfare". It's essentially a form of more or less generalized guerilla struggle. Lind clearly had Iraq in mind when writing his book. Modern states are still stuck in "2nd Generation Warfare" and are therefore singularly unequipped to deal with the new realities of war. 2GW relies on technological superiority, rigid command structures and equally rigid tactics to "impose order on a chaotic battlefield". But what if the enemy is invisible and never shows up on the battlefield in the first place? What Lind calls "3rd Generation Warfare" is a version of the German Blitzkrieg, combining superior force and tactical flexibility, but in the end, not even this will work against a 4GW opponent.

Lind's advice is to make the military of the modern state as similar as possible to its 4GW opponents. The task is to "out-guerilla the guerilla". The troops must fraternize with the locals and attempt to win their hearts and minds by providing protection against irregulars or criminals, taking part in public works projects, and respect their traditions and customs. In many ways, the troops should act more like friendly policemen rather than foreign occupants. The local state should be preserved rather than destroyed. Lind says quite explicitly that cash is even more important than firepower. Yes, the military should attempt to bribe as many influential natives as possible! The best way to combat the 4GW enemy is to mimic its tactics. The army of the future will revolve around light infantry (by which Lind means tactically flexible infantry units often working behind enemy lines), rather than high tech gadgets such as drones. The key word is "de-escalation". Lind believes that the military must have an explicit exit plan from the start, since a prolonged occupation of a foreign nation simply isn't feasible. Clearly, the author doesn't believe in any grandiose schemes for "nation-building" under US tutelage!

Lind admits that there is another way of fighting 4GW enemies: to use modern military superiority to escalate the conflict in a truly brutal manner. He calls it "the Hama model", after Syrian Baathist leader Hafez al-Assad's bloody suppression of a Sunni Muslim revolt in the city of Hama in 1982. Within a month, about 20,000 people were killed and large portions of Hama destroyed. The catch is that such an escalation must be swift and catch the rebels unaware. It can't be repeated on a regular basis. Prolonged brutality will simply stiffen the resistance (and perhaps the calls for international intervention), but so will too little brutality once you decide on the "Hama" option. It would be interesting to know what the author said about the US attack on Fallujah in Iraq...

Even more controversially, Lind suggests that 4GW is the future even of the Western nations. Yes, the war

bands and irregulars are coming to \*your\* backyard, and Lind believes the Western governments have committed a terrible mistake in permitting mass immigration from the Third World. The immigrants are the material from which future war bands will be formed. Lind believes that the Western militaries nevertheless have an advantage on their home turf, precisely because it is their turf. The problem is creating conditions for good governance. If the governments aren't seen as legitimate, the Western nations could become failed states in the grip of both foreign and local war bands.

“4th Generation Warfare Handbook” is somewhat uneven, with some chapters being mostly of interest to specialists in the subject. Other chapters are written in a narrative (“fiction”) style, which I personally found annoying. I also get the feeling that Lind might be somewhat naïve! Was it really likely that Sunni Muslims in Iraq would tolerate the presence of US troops if they had bribed some notables or built a couple of health clinics? Under any post-Saddam constitutional arrangement, the Sunnis were bound to lose their privileged position. Conversely, “letting the state be” in post-Saddam Iraq would have meant keeping Sunnis (and Baathists) in power at the expense of the Shia majority – not a clever option either if you want to keep on good terms with the local Joes or Alis! Historically, “the Hama model” has been used more often than the more friendly model suggested by Lind. And when the Hama model fails to reach its objective, there's always genocide...

William Lind actually sounds pretty sympathetic! Let's hope his models will work. If not, we will get many new confirmations that war (including 4GW) indeed is hell.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Essential Mindset Shift for the Generals and the Troops

By Daniel F.

All American troops posted to overseas theaters would benefit from reading this manual. But it is the generals and higher-ups who most need the lessons contained in it. 4th generation warfare represents “a crisis of the legitimacy of the state,” and the first step towards fighting them successfully is a mindset shift: to recognize that military force is incapable, by itself, of restoring legitimacy to a state. The standard American practice of “firepower on targets” is simply not effective in 4GW. “Great states must learn how to preserve enemy states at the same time that they defeat them.” This is obviously a central lesson from the Iraq conflict, where this axiom was violated in spades. This manual sets about to correct those mistakes and provide a roadmap for success in the new type of conflict we face.

The manual introduces a new paradigm for dealing with conflicts involving non-state actors. Along with the traditional view of war as involving three levels: the tactical, the operational and the strategic, the authors introduce a new tripartite lens for understanding 4G war: the physical, the mental and the moral. In each case, a higher level trumps a lower level. Indeed, the authors describe the central dilemma of 4GW as the fact that “what works for you on the physical (and sometimes mental) level often works against you at the moral level.” A corollary of this is that “it is more important not to kill the wrong people than it is to kill armed opponents.” Enemy bodycounts may merely present media and PR victories for your opponents, while demoralizing our own troops, and turning public opinion against you.

Among the central concepts and topics discussed in this book are:

-- De-escalation: More often than not, our military goals are furthered by de-escalating, whereas most troops have “escalation” as a default reaction to most situations. This concept goes hand in hand with the idea of preserving the state, and keeping the local populace on our side, or at least not against us.

-- “51% solutions”, rather than total victory are desirable in 4GW.

-- Integrating with, and not alienating, the local populace as key to success.

-- Openness with the press, and admitting to mistakes.

-- Intelligence as a bottom-up rather than a top-down affair. They give the memorable example of the Swedish word for military intelligence, which translates as “corrections from below”.

-- Retraining line infantry as “light infantry”. Troops must become flexible, independent, self-reliant, self-disciplined, less “orderly” and hierarchical, and focus on achieving goals rather than merely carrying out orders.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the American military (outside of special ops and SEALs that already have this mindset) is to move away from the 2G, centralized, command-based, top-down approach, towards a 3G model that emphasizes nimbleness, lightness of footprint, quick reaction times, and that learns to use the techniques of the enemy against him, rather than relying on firepower alone. The authors make a strong case that Western militaries (and the American military in particular) are stuck in a 2nd generation mindset: “Firepower on targets” is what war is about to them, and it is a hopelessly dated concept. Indeed, it was dated in WWII when the 3G German military defeated a technically superior 2G French army.

Implicitly if not explicitly, the manual focuses on our experience in the Middle East. It is a useful thought experiment to contemplate conflicts in other regions: e.g. the Mexican drug war, the Tamil rebellion in Sri Lanka, the Muslim separatist movement in the Philippines, etc., and to imagine the concepts introduced here applied in those situations. In any event, given that our military most needs a manual for dealing with the Middle East, this manual is the right tool for our era.

This is a manual for soldiers. Given the events of 11/13/15 in Paris as well as the pervasive low-level civil wars that are taking place across the West, perhaps the publishers can consider producing another manual: 4th Generation Warfare Handbook for the Civilian. Many more of us will be faced with the question of how to defend ourselves against 4GW invaders and hostiles in the places we live than will be posted overseas as soldiers. The proper responses for civilians dealing with conflict within Europe will be very different than the solutions for soldiers fighting in the Middle East. This manual was not written to address that question, but there will certainly be demand for solutions to that challenge in the decades to come. The author’s pronouncement that “Fourth Generation war at home is significantly easier to win than Fourth Generation war abroad” will be cold comfort to the families of the victims of 11/13/15 in Paris, to rape victims in Sweden and Rotherham or victims of racist gang crime in Baltimore or LA. Again, this is not a criticism of this book, which achieves what it set out to do, but a call for a complementary volume.

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