

On War Series# 50-1 | 101-51 | 152-102 | 203-153 | 241-204**THE FREE CONGRESS COMMENTARY
BY WILLIAM S. LIND****ON WAR #50**

More Thoughts From The 4th Generation Seminar

1/16/04

By William S. Lind

The seminar on Fourth Generation war that meets each month at my house took as its December topic the following question: You are the commander of the Marine Corps unit that will take over Fallujah in March; what will you do?

Army and Marine Corps participants agreed that your first task is to tell the locals, "We're not like the guys who just left" – the 82nd Airborne. Wear the new Marine Corps utilities that look different from the Army desert uniforms. Don't "relieve in place;" instead, move into new areas, not the Army's old billets. Patrol on foot, not in vehicles. Wear soft covers, not helmets and body armor. Don't wear sunglasses. Teach your troops a bit of Arabic, so they can say, "We're different." Teach them enough Arab culture so they avoid gross insults, like stepping on the heads of people they detain. Don't do raids, breaking people's doors down in the middle of the night.

Make sure you have plenty of money, and pass it around. Maybe the first thing the Marines should say is, "We are here to pay the blood money" – compensation to families who have had members killed by Americans. Without blood money, the locals' honor requires that they fight you to avenge their dead. Here, Washington is a major obstacle, because it requires peacetime accounting rules for any money our forces spend. Commanders need a generous slush fund.

Remember that success comes not from escalation, but from de-escalation. This may require taking more casualties than you inflict. We need to re-think "force protection;" if it isolates us from the population, it works against us.

Of course, we will take casualties. How long can we sustain this alternate, "softer" approach as our casualties mount? The troops need to be trained and prepared for doing so, because their natural response will be to take it out on the population. One Marine said that we have to talk through traumatic events with the men when they happen, so they do not take revenge. They have to be willing not to kill.

If Fallujah is a hard spot, don't start there; start where the situation is more favorable. Maybe we should not go into Fallujah at first.

A Marine suggested we use the "ink blot" strategy the Special Forces initially used in Vietnam, with good results. Let each squad get to know one particular area and the people in it. Regrettably, we probably won't have enough troops to make this work.

We asked some radical questions: what if the Marines carried no weapons? One participant who spent time in Iraq said we have to be armed, because Iraq is an armed society and anyone without a weapon looks weak. Should we offer the guerillas a deal where they take responsibility for local security? Should we set up a liaison office where the locals can tell us what they need to get life working again, then we try to provide that to them? Should our troops wear civilian clothes, at least when working with Iraqis to repair infrastructure?

One Marine said that in Numaniya, his men had backed off on checkpoints for weapons and had loosened controls a little at a time; this gained a good deal of popular support. Another Marine talked about a rule we had in Somalia, where locals could carry weapons around Americans so long as they pointed the muzzles down. The Somali militiamen were willing to do that.

Toward the end of our seminar, we faced what may be the toughest question: what if the Marines do all this (and the thinking at Camp Pendleton seems to be similar to what we have come up with), and it doesn't work? An Army officer said that at that point, the U.S. military may need to turn the problem back over to the politicians in Washington; the military will have done all it can do.

But there may be some other approaches. There is the British Northwest Frontier Agent model, where we would try to shift local balances of power. This may mean more to the locals than anything else, because the new power relationships we help create may be there long after we leave. But this requires superb local intelligence, and we usually don't have it. There may be a "Mafia model," where instead of acting directly, we contract "hits" on the bad guys, who just disappear with no American fingerprints on them. This helps keep us out of the local blood feud culture.

At its first session, our seminar said that we may find ourselves asking questions to which there are no answers. But we intend to keep asking. In January, in addition to continuing the above discussion, we will ask the question, how do you train Marines for all this? I'll let you know where that discussion goes in a future column.

ON WAR #49

How 2004 Looks From Potsdam

1/07/04

By William S. Lind

At the beginning of a new year, it is traditional for columnists, commentators and other harmless drudges to take a look at their crystal ball and forecast what the year may bring. Fortunately, I have superior technology. My home telephone was made in 1918. When I need to see down the road a bit, I just call the Kaiser (he is, after all, my reporting senior). I got through to Potsdam a few nights ago, and here is what *der Allerhoechste* thinks may be in store for us in 2004:

- In Iraq, the War of National Liberation led by the Baath will diminish as the Baath itself fragments. This may lead to a "pause" of sorts in the guerilla war, which the neo-cons will falsely hail as a sign of American victory. In fact, the splintering of the Baath will move Iraq even farther away from being able to recreate a real state. As the Baath fades, true Fourth Generation forces will rise, leading to more fighting among Iraqis and an eventual multi-sided, permanent Iraqi civil war. Attacks on Americans will rise again as various Fourth Generation entities seek to show that they are the deadliest enemy of the Crusaders. 2004 will also see the Shiites play a more active role. If Mr. Bremer tries to thwart them by rigging elections (or just not having them), our troops are likely to end up with their hands full of Shiite.
- His Majesty foresees three other interesting possibilities in Iraq. First, another long, hot summer with no security and little electric power may generate an *intifada* on the Palestinian model; the U.S. Army's use of Israeli tactics increases this possibility, because it leads Iraqis to visualize themselves as Palestinians. Second, the morale of American troops in Iraq, already low, may decline to the point where the U.S. Army starts to crack, much as the German Army did in August, 1918. Third, when the Marines go back into Iraq, they will use very different tactics from the Army, tactics that might have worked had they been applied earlier. But again like Germany in 1918, the situation will be too far gone for any tactics to redeem it.
- The war in Afghanistan will unroll like all previous Afghan wars. The Taliban will slowly but steadily retake the countryside, while we cling to Kabul and try to prop up our puppet government. The only question is when we, like the British and the Soviets, will recognize reality, give up and go home.
- Far more important than either Iraq or Afghanistan is Pakistan, where the state is crumbling. 2004 may well be the year when it goes over the edge, handing the international Islamic jihad 40-50 nuclear weapons. His Majesty said, "General Musharraf is about where I was at the beginning of November, 1918."
- Throughout the Islamic world, al Qaeda and other non-state forces will thrive and grow. Speaking of Libya's recent attempt at a rapprochement with the United States, His Majesty said, "I had a good laugh when your neo-cons, who make my former advisors look intelligent, claimed Quaddafi did this out of fear of the U.S. What terrifies him and drives him toward other states, including America, is fear of non-state elements inside Libya. This is just one small example of the unholy alliances states will make with other states, and non-state forces will make with other non-state forces. At our last *tabagie*, my ancestors from the time of the wars of religion in Europe were all nodding and saying that it will soon be time for them to go back, because it will all be so familiar."
- Look for non-Islamic Fourth Generation forces to make their mark in the United States. America is now making war on the FARC in Columbia, and it is likely to return the favor. "Remember, they've got a better distribution system in the

United States than the *Reichspost* had in Germany.”

- “Your government’s color-coded alert system is almost as effective as my U-boat war was in undermining your own strategy,” His Majesty volunteered. “The other side knows exactly what intelligence indicators you look for, and it is playing you like a glockenspiel. When it is not going to do anything big, it feeds you false indicators to make you jump, undermining your own people’s sense of security and making your enemy look stronger than he is. Of course, when something real is coming, there will be no indicators at all.”

I knew there was a *Zapfenstreich* in Heaven that night, and I did not want to keep my Sovereign on the phone with the petty concerns of earth. But I did follow up his last comment with a final question: was “something real” likely to happen in 2004? His Majesty sighed. “Look for something big, real big, right before your election. Al Qaeda has an excellent sense of timing.”

“But wouldn’t that help reelect George Bush?” I asked, puzzled.

“*Ja, genau,*” the Kaiser replied. “I guess you haven’t spent enough time at court to really understand these things. As Bismarck said to me just yesterday, al Qaeda and George Bush need each other.”

ON WAR #47

Understanding Fourth Generation War

12/19/03

By William S. Lind

Will Saddam’s capture mark a turning point in the war in Iraq? Don’t count on it. Few resistance fighters have been fighting for Saddam personally. Saddam’s capture may lead to a fractioning of the Baath Party, which would move us further toward a Fourth Generation situation where no one can recreate the state. It may also tell the Shiites that they no longer need America to protect them from Saddam, giving them more options in their struggle for free elections.

If the U.S. Army used the capture of Saddam to announce the end of tactics that enrage ordinary Iraqis and drive them toward active resistance, it might buy us a bit of de-escalation. But I don’t think we’ll that be smart. When it comes to Fourth Generation war, it seems nobody in the American military gets it.

Recently, a faculty member at the National Defense University wrote to Marine Corps General Mattis, commander of I MAR DIV, to ask his views on the importance of reading military history. Mattis responded with an eloquent defense of taking time to read history, one that should go up on the wall at all of our military schools. “Thanks to my reading, I have never been caught flat-footed by any situation,” Mattis said. “It doesn’t give me all the answers, but it lights what is often a dark path ahead.”

Still, even such a capable and well-bread commander as General Mattis seems to miss the point about Fourth Generation warfare. He said in his missive, “Ultimately, a real understanding of history means that we face NOTHING new under the sun. For all the ‘4th Generation of War’ intellectuals running around today saying that the nature of war has fundamentally changed, the tactics are wholly new, etc., I must respectfully say...‘Not really’...”

Well, that isn’t quite what we Fourth Generation intellectuals are saying. On the contrary, we have pointed out over and over that the 4th Generation is not novel but a return, specifically a return to the way war worked before the rise of the state. Now, as then, many different entities, not just governments of states, will wage war. They will wage war for many different reasons, not just “the extension of politics by other means.” And they will use many different tools to fight war, not restricting themselves to what we recognize as military forces. When I am asked to recommend a good book describing what a Fourth Generation world will be like, I usually suggest Barbara Tuchman’s *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century*.

Nor are we saying that Fourth Generation tactics are new. On the contrary, many of the tactics Fourth Generation opponents use are standard guerilla tactics. Others, including much of what we call “terrorism,” are classic Arab light cavalry warfare carried out with modern technology at the operational and strategic, not just tactical, levels.

As I have said before in this column, most of what we are facing in Iraq today is not yet Fourth Generation warfare, but a War of National Liberation, fought by people whose goal is to restore a Baathist state. But as that goal fades and those forces splinter, Fourth Generation war will come more and more to the fore. What will characterize it is not vast changes in how the enemy fights, but rather in who fights and what they fight for. The change in who fights makes it difficult for us to tell friend

from foe. A good example is the advent of female suicide bombers; do U.S. troops now start frisking every Moslem woman they encounter? The change in what our enemies fight for makes impossible the political compromises that are necessary to ending any war. We find that when it comes to making peace, we have no one to talk to and nothing to talk about. And the end of a war like that in Iraq becomes inevitable: the local state we attacked vanishes, leaving behind either a stateless region (Somalia) or a façade of a state (Afghanistan) within which more non-state elements rise and fight.

General Mattis is correct that none of this is new. It is only new to state armed forces that were designed to fight other state armed forces. The fact that no state military has recently succeeded in defeating a non-state enemy reminds us that Clio has a sense of humor: history also teaches us that not all problems have solutions.

ON WAR #46

How To Fight 4GW, continued

12/12/03

By William S. Lind

In On War #45, I began a report from the seminar I take part in on how to fight Fourth Generation war. This column continues that report.

- One key to success in 4GW may be "losing to win." Part of the reason the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are not succeeding is that our initial invasion destroyed the state, creating a happy hunting ground for Fourth Generation forces. In a world where the state is in decline, if you destroy a state, it is very difficult to recreate it. Here's another quote from the minutes of the seminar:

The discussion concluded that while war against another state may be necessary one should seek to preserve that state even as one defeats it. Grant the opposing armies the "honors of war," tell them what a fine job they did, make their defeat "civilized" so they can survive the war institutionally intact and then work for your side. This would be similar to 18th century notions of civilized war and contribute greatly to propping up a fragile state. Humiliating the defeated enemy troops, especially in front of their own population, is always a serious mistake but one that Americans are prone to make. This is because the "football mentality" we have developed since World War II works against us.

- In many ways, the 21st century will offer a war between the forces of 4GW and Brave New World. The 4GW forces understand this, while the international elites that seek BNW do not. Another quote from the minutes:

Osama bin Ladin, though reportedly very wealthy, lives in a cave. Yes, it is for security but it is also leadership by example. It may make it harder to separate (physically or psychologically) the 4GW leaders from their troops. It also makes it harder to discredit those leaders with their followers... This contrasts dramatically with the BNW elites who are physically and psychologically separated (by a huge gap) from their followers (even the generals in most conventional armies are to a great extent separated from their men)... The BNW elites are in many respects occupying the moral low ground but don't know it.

- 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. On Cyprus, the U.N. commander rated the Argentine battalion as more effective than the British or the Austrians because the Argentines did not want to fight. What lessons can U.S. forces draw from this?
- How would the Mafia do an occupation?
- 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?
- How could the Defense Department's concept of "Transformation" be redefined so as to come to grips with 4GW? If you

read the current "Transformation Planning Guidance" put out by DOD, you find nothing in it on 4GW, indeed nothing that relates at all to either of the two wars we are now fighting. It is all oriented toward fighting other state armed forces that fight us symmetrically.

The seminar intends to continue working on this question of redefining "Transformation" (die Verwandlung?) so as to make it relevant to 4GW. However, for our December meeting, we have posed the following problem: It is Spring, 2004. The U.S. Marines are to relieve the Army in the occupation of Fallujah, perhaps Iraq's hottest hot spot (and one where the 82nd Airborne's tactics have been pouring gasoline on the fire). You are the commander of the Marine force taking over Fallujah. What do you do?

I'll let you know what we come up with.

If you would like to interview Mr. Lind, please allow me to be of assistance.

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ON WAR #45

How To Fight Fourth Generation War
 12/05/03
 By William S. Lind

For almost two years, a small seminar has been meeting at my house to work on the question of how to fight Fourth Generation war. It is made up mostly of Marines, lieutenant through lieutenant colonel, with one Army officer, one National Guard tanker captain and one foreign officer. We figured somebody ought to be working on the most difficult question facing the U.S. armed forces, and nobody else seems to be.

The seminar recently decided it was time to go public with a few of the ideas it has come up with, and use this column to that end. We have no magic solutions to offer, only some thoughts. We recognized from the outset that the whole task may be hopeless; state militaries may not be able to come to grips with Fourth Generation enemies no matter what they do. But for what they are worth, here are our thoughts to date:

- 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 (not just bumping into the enemy and calling for fire) and can fight with its own weapons instead of depending on supporting arms. We estimate that U.S. Marine infantry today has a sustained march rate of only 10-15 kilometers per day; German World War II line, not light, infantry could sustain 40 kilometers.
- Fourth Generation opponents will not sign up to the Geneva Conventions, but might some be open to a chivalric code governing how our war with them would be fought? It's worth exploring.
- How U.S. forces conduct themselves after the battle may be as important in 4GW as how they fight the battle.

- 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.
- Unfortunately, the American doctrine of “force protection” works against integration and generally hurts us badly. Here’s a quote from the minutes of the seminar:

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. The British approach of getting the helmets off as soon as possible may actually be saving lives.

- 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.
- What can the U.S. military learn from cops? Our reserve and National Guard units include lots of cops; are we taking advantage of what they know?

I will continue this report in my next column.

ON WAR #44

The Politics of War
By William S. Lind

As I said in an earlier column, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are already lost. Nothing the United States can do can yield an American victory in either place.

In all probability, both wars were lost before the first bomb was dropped or the first shot fired. They were lost because, in an era when the state is in decline, our wares on the Afghan and Iraqi states were doomed to be too successful. We fought to destroy two regimes, but what we ended up doing was destroying two states. Neither in Afghanistan nor in Iraq are we able to recreate the state, which means that Fourth Generation, non-state forces will come to dominate both places. And neither we nor any other state knows how to defeat Fourth Generation enemies.

To the degree America had a chance of real victory in either war, we lost that chance through early mistakes. In Afghanistan, we failed to bring the Pashtun into the new government, which means we remain allied with the Uzbeks and Tajiks against the Pashtun. Unfortunately, in the end the Pashtun always win Afghan wars.

In Iraq, the two fatal early errors were outlawing the Baath Party and disbanding the Iraqi army. Outlawing the Baath deprived the Sunni community of its only political vehicle, which meant it had no choice but to fight us. Disbanding the Iraqi army left us with no native force that could maintain order, and also provided the resistance with a large pool of armed and trained fighters. Washington is now making noises about reversing both of those early decisions, but it is simply too late. As von Moltke said, a mistake in initial dispositions can seldom be put right.

What is interesting is that the most powerful man in Washington, Karl Rove, who is President George W. Bush's political advisor, has apparently figured out that the Iraq war is lost (Afghanistan is not on his political radar screen). Further, he has discerned that if Mr. Bush goes into the 2004 election with the war in Iraq still going on, and still going badly, Mr. Bush is toast. The result was the recent decision to turn back to the Iraqi's sometime next summer.

Will it work? Probably not. Mr. Rove still faces two big fights, and neither will be easy. The first will be a nasty political brawl with the so-called "neo-cons," more accurately neo-Jacobins, who gave us the Iraq War in the first place. Their political future is at stake in Iraq, and if we are defeated, they go straight into history's wastebasket. They are determined to fight down to the last American paratrooper, and once they figure out that Mr. Rove wants out, they will go after him with everything they have.

The other fight will be in Iraq itself, where we will see a race between American efforts to create at least the fig leaf of a functioning Iraqi state so we can get out with some tail feathers intact and a resistance movement that is rapidly gaining strength. My bet is that, unfortunately, we will lose. Again, the root problem is that in a Fourth Generation world, once you have destroyed a state recreating it is very difficult. More, as is typical of a power facing defeat, our moves are too little and too late. By next summer, when we hope to transfer sovereignty to a new Iraqi government, it is likely to represent a frustration of the Shiites' hope to use their majority status to create a Shiite Islamic Republic. That may deprive us, and the new Iraqi government, of the one prop we still have, a relatively quiescent Shiite population.

The upshot of all of this is that despite Mr. Rove's belated waking to political reality, Mr. Bush will go into the 2004 election with one of two albatrosses around his neck: a continuing, losing guerilla war, with ever-increasing American casualties, or an out-and-out American defeat, where we have left Iraq very much the way the Soviets left Afghanistan. Which is, by the way, the way we will also leave Afghanistan itself.

The neo-cons' parting gift to real American conservatives will be President Hillary Clinton. Thanks a lot, guys.

ON WAR #42

Post-Machine Gun Tactics

By William S. Lind

Thirty years ago this month, I first went to the field with the United States Marine Corps. I was a new staffer for Senator Robert Taft, Jr., of Ohio, and the Marines had invited me down for the "Company War" at The Basic School at Quantico, Virginia. Early one frosty November morning, I found myself standing in the commander's hatch of an M-48 tank moving about two miles per hour with the infantry walking alongside, just as in 1917. When we reached the "objective," which was an enemy machine gun nest, the tank stopped while the infantry formed a line two men deep and walked into the machine gun. I turned to the Marine major who was my escort and asked, "Where are Frederick the Great and the band?" It was obvious that what I was seeing was not modern war.

Sadly, the last time I went to the field with TBS a couple years ago, little had changed. I again watched the lieutenants hurl themselves against enemy machine guns. When the attack had concluded, I turned to them and said, "You know you are all dead, don't you?" One of the lieutenants replied, "We know that, but what else can you do?"

There are answers to that question, in the form of the "post-machine gun tactics" developed during and after World War I by a number of foreign armies. Those tactics are now readily available to Marine lieutenants and everyone else, through three superb books written by a former Marine Corps gunnery sergeant, H. John Poole.

John Poole's first book, *The Last Hundred Yards*, came out in 1997 and immediately acquired almost cult status with Marine NCOs. As Bruce Gudmundsson, the author of *Stormtroop Tactics*, said, it represented at least a half-century's advance over official Marine Corps (and U.S. Army) tactics. Of critical importance, it also filled a gap left by writings such as Gudmundsson's book and my own *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* by looking in great detail at the level where tactics and techniques come together, the world of the fire team, squad and platoon. It opened a whole new world to corporals, sergeants and staff NCOs by focusing on that toughest of battlefield problems, covering the last hundred yards to the enemy. It showed them that you do not have to (and never should) throw your men into enemy machine guns.

In August 2001, Gunny Poole published another book with a different take on the same problem: *Phantom Soldier: The Enemy's Answer to U.S. Firepower*. Here, Poole focused on the Asian way of war, where tactics usually follow the indirect approach.

Avoiding the frontal jousting contests beloved by Western armies, Eastern militaries usually use stealth, subtlety and fieldcraft to evade Western firepower and take their enemies from behind, in a manner and at a time the enemy least expects. When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, Phantom Soldier suddenly became the hottest book in the Pentagon – which did not prevent the failure of Operation Anaconda, where al Qaeda fought exactly as Poole said an Eastern force would fight.

John Poole's newest book has just come out. Titled *The Tiger's Way: A U.S. Private's Best Chance for Survival*, it looks at Asian, Russian and German small-unit tactics to draw the best from each. Most importantly, Poole uses his new book to redefine "the basics," that mantra of bad infantry instructors who use the term to justify their "Hey-diddle-diddle, straight-up-the-middle" approach that measures success in own casualties. Gunny Poole's new basics, each of which gets its own chapter, are microterrain appreciation, harnessing the senses, night familiarity (which is far more than night vision devices), nondetectable movement, guarded communication, discreet force at close range (of prime importance in Iraq, where the U.S. Army's indiscreet use of firepower is daily generating more enemies), combat deception and one-on-one tactical decision making, which encourages thinking and initiative down through the most junior ranks.

It is of course inexcusable that most of the schools American privates go through still teach pre-machine gun tactics. If the Pentagon thought about war, that would be one of the first things it would change. But so long as the Pentagon thinks only about programs and money, American soldiers and Marines will need to discover post-machine gun tactics on their own. Gunny Poole's books offer them a readily available way to do so. My advice to our junior infantry leaders is, get these books and read them now if you want to keep your men alive.

ON WAR #41

Indicators - Iraqi guerrillas are attacking tanks

11/04/03

By William S. Lind

This week's tragic shooting down of an Army Chinook helicopter near Fallujah, with the loss of 16 soldiers, may or may not point to a significant new development in the Iraq war. Helicopters proved highly vulnerable in Vietnam and in the Soviet war in Afghanistan as well, and there is no shortage of SA-7 missiles in Iraq, as U.S. forces there have long known. Moreover, there is a fairly simple technique helicopters can use to minimize their vulnerability to the SA-7 and similar shoulder-fired missiles: fly high. In Afghanistan, Soviet infantry referred to their helicopter pilots as "the Cosmonauts" because of their desire for altitude. Of course, altitude also works against us in that it prevents the people in helicopters from seeing what is happening on the ground. But when your aircraft is a big piñata, high is the way to fly.

Three events last week may actually provide more in the way of indicators as to where the Iraq war is headed. The first two were successful attacks on American M-1 Abrams tanks by Iraqi resistance forces. In the first attack, the M-1 was taken out by what appears to have been a tandem-warhead light anti-tank weapon, which no one knew the resistance possessed. Fortunately, in that attack no Americans were seriously hurt, though the tank was disabled. The second attack resulted in the complete destruction of an M-1, with the turret blown off the chassis of the tank by a large improvised mine. Sadly, two American tank crewmen were killed and one badly wounded. The technique is the same as that used by the Palestinians to destroy several Israeli Merkava tanks, so it should not have come as a surprise to us.

More significant than the destruction of two American tanks is the fact that Iraqi guerrillas are attacking tanks. This is an indicator that the guerilla war is developing significantly more rapidly than reports in Washington suggest. With the second stage of the Iraq war just six months old, one would expect the guerillas to be attacking only weak, vulnerable targets, such as supply columns. The fact that they are going after the most difficult of all ground targets, heavy tanks, is surprising. It means they lack neither confidence nor skill.

A third indicator comes from a widely-reported incident where an American battalion commander threatened an Iraqi under interrogation with his pistol and now faces criminal assault charges for doing so. The charges themselves are absurd, since the Iraqi was not injured and the information he provided prevented American soldiers from being ambushed. Here, the indicator comes from the identity of the Iraqi. Who was he? An Iraqi policeman.

The Bush administration's strategy for the war in Iraq, to the degree floundering can be called a strategy, is "Iraqification:" developing Iraqi armed security forces such as police, border guards, civil defense guards and a "New Iraqi Army," and dumping the insurgency in their laps. Last week's incident shows the major flaw in that strategy: it assumes that the Iraqis in those

forces will really be working for us.

Guerillas and, even more, Fourth Generation elements deal with state security forces primarily by taking them from within. They will also attack members of the state forces and their families, as part of punishing collaborators. But taking them from within is even more effective, because when we think the members of the state forces we create are working for us, we let them in positions where they can do real damage. Only too late do we discover where their real loyalty lies.

Naively, we seem to believe that if we are paying someone, they will give us their honest best. Some will. But especially in old, cynical societies such as that in Mesopotamia, people see nothing wrong with serving two or more masters, and getting a paycheck from each. They have no real loyalty beyond their family and, perhaps, their clan or tribe. Everyone else is trying to use them, and they are trying to use everyone else. That is just how the place works.

As we create more and more Iraqi armed units, and try desperately to hand the war over to them, don't be surprised if they refuse to play our game. They will tell us what we want to hear to get paid, and then do what benefits them. Often, that will just be seeing and hearing nothing as the resistance forces go about their business. Sometimes, it will be shooting Americans in the back. It doesn't take many such shootings before we have to treat the Iraqi forces we have ourselves created with distrust, pushing even those who want to work with us into our enemies' arms.

One other indicator: a friend recently noted to me that the rapidly improving techniques we see from the Iraqi guerrillas bear a striking resemblance to those used by the Chechen guerrillas against the Russians.

Might it be that we are not the only ones to have a coalition in Iraq?

ON WAR #40

Curiouser And Curiouser

10/30/2003

By William S. Lind

If there is one thing that all Washington should be able to agree on, it is that the United States does not want to fight another war in Korea. The bloodbath would be horrific, the financial cost would be ruinous, and the effects of such a war on the stability of northeast Asia would be unpredictable. Plus, we might not win.

Yet when President Bush was asked during his recent Asian trip about North Korea's request for a non-aggression pact with the United States, he replied, "We will not have a treaty, if that's what you're asking. That's off the table."

For heaven's sake, why?

North Korea has offered to give up its nuclear weapons program for such a treaty. Speaking with Thailand's prime minister, Mr. Bush later said, "We have no intention of invading North Korea." If that is true, then what is the Administration's objection to a formal non-aggression pact? At the very least, offering North Korea such a pact would put the onus on them if they chose to continue their nuclear program instead. And if they did in fact give up their nukes in return for a treaty, we would walk away with a very good deal.

Here we see the underlying problem with the Bush administration's foreign policy. On the surface, its actions often do not make sense. There is no obvious, clear, or even rational explanation for positions the administration takes. Naturally, that leads people at home and abroad to ask what is really going on. What is the Bush team up to? What is their hidden agenda? What are their real intentions and plans?

The Iraq war is exhibit A. Since Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction and was not working with non-state, Fourth Generation forces (aka "terrorists"), what are the real reasons America attacked Iraq? For oil? For Israel? For world dominion? Everyone speculates, because the official answers don't make sense.

Now the same speculation is underway about American intentions in Korea. Does America perhaps plan to attack North Korea's nuclear facilities? Does it think a war in Korea would injure China, which elements in Washington see as a probable future enemy? Do Pentagon advocates of the so-called "Revolution in Military Affairs" believe they could win an easy victory over North Korea, thereby justifying even more money for high-tech weapons? What are the unstated, real reasons behind Mr. Bush's refusal to consider a non-aggression pact?

It appears that North Korea may save the Bush administration from itself in this case. Secretary of State Colin Powell has indicated that the U.S. might offer a written guarantee of some sort that it will not attack North Korea, a guarantee that would be backed by China, Japan and Russia as well. After first rejecting this offer, the North Korea now appears willing to reconsider. This is wise from their perspective, because a guarantee involving the other regional powers would put more, not fewer, constraints on Washington than would a bilateral treaty. If America signed, then attacked North Korea anyway under the administration's preventative war doctrine, it would have serious problems with China, Russia and Japan. It is all too easy to imagine Mr. Rumsfeld, at a news conference following an American strike on North Korea, referring to a non-aggression pact as a mere "scrap of paper."

But the underlying problem remains. So long as Washington's actions do not make sense in terms of its stated policies and intentions, people will keep wondering what the real game is. Curiouser and curiouser, as Alice would say. One is tempted to revise a bon mot from that worst of years, 1914: in Pyongyang, the situation is serious but not hopeless; in Washington, it is hopeless but not serious.

On War #37

Utopia Means "No Place"

By William S. Lind

In an earlier column, I noted that the current phase of the war in Iraq is driven by three different elements: chaos, a War of National Liberation (which is inflicting most of the casualties) and Fourth Generation war. In time, the Fourth Generation elements will come to predominate, as they fill the vacuum created by the destruction of the Iraqi state.

But right now, chaos is again on the front page. Former soldiers of the Iraqi army are rioting for their back pay. The scope of Mr. Bremer's blunder in dismissing the Iraqi army instead of using it to maintain order is more and more evident. Many of those former Iraqi soldiers whom we could have employed are now joining the War of National Liberation, shooting at and sometimes hitting Americans.

But two aspects of this burst of chaos point to a more fundamental American error. Speaking of the rioting soldiers, the Washington Times reported that "many of the men at Sunday's protest in Baghdad voiced desperation that they had no jobs and no money to support their families." The Bush Administration, hoping to turn the American public's gaze away from the reality in Iraq, meanwhile trotted out the first American-trained battalion of the "New Iraqi Army," a "multicultural" force supposedly indoctrinated to be nice to other Iraqis. (If Iraq breaks up along ethnic and sectarian lines, the New Iraqi Army will do the same, just as the Lebanese army did.)

What both these phenomena point to is a classic American error, utopianism. The old Iraqi army did not meet utopian standards, so it had to be sent away, unpaid. We must create a New Iraqi Army which will reflect our highest ideals. Meanwhile, Iraqis don't have jobs, because Saddam's state-run economy doesn't meet utopian standards. We have to "privatize" that economy, which if other countries' experiences are any guide will involve several years of continued economic decline and jobless chaos. Again, anything less would "betray American ideals."

It is useful to remember that the word "utopia" means "no place." By definition, utopias cannot exist in the real world. Attempts to create them lead to disaster, as both the French and Russian Revolutions attest.

What Mr. Bremer and the neo-con philosophes behind him are insisting upon guarantees more, not less, chaos in Iraq. Panglossing through reality, they refuse to revive the old Iraq before attempting to create their utopian New Iraq. The electric power system offers an example. Iraqis know how to make their 1960's-technology electric grid work. But we won't let them. American companies have to get the job, and since they cannot work with 1960's technology, they have to build a whole new system from the bottom up. Meanwhile, Iraqis go without power.

Of course, the whole neo-con enterprise was utopian from the beginning. Denying the limits history places on potential (the sin of "historicism" in their Straussian Newspeak), neo-cons really believe every flea-bitten, fly-blown Third World hellhole can be turned into Switzerland. All it takes is enough American troops.

An old line about the Marine Corps comes to mind: the difference between the Boy Scouts and the Marine Corps is that the Boy Scouts have adult supervision. Are there no adults overseeing American policy in Iraq? If there are, it is about time for them to

tell the hapless Mr. Bremer to get the old Iraq working again, and let Iraqis worry about utopia. That might at least give the United States what it so desperately needs in Iraq: a way out.

Biography:

Mr. Lind is author of the *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Westview Press, 1985); co-author, with Gary Hart, of *America Can Win: The Case for Military Reform* (Adler & Adler, 1986); and co-author, with William H. Marshner, of *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda* (Free Congress Foundation, 1987). He has written extensively for both popular media, including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Harper's*, and professional military journals, including *The Marine Corps Gazette*, *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* and *Military Review*.

Mr. Lind co-authored the prescient article, "[The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation](#)," which was published in *The Marine Corps Gazette* in October, 1989 and which first propounded the concept of "Fourth Generation War." Mr. Lind and his co-authors predicted that states would increasingly face threats not from other states, but from non-state forces whose primary allegiance was to their religion, ethnic group or ideology. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the article has been credited for its foresight by *The New York Times Magazine* and *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Mr. Lind was one of the founders of cultural conservatism, which argues that America's success has been a product more of its traditional, Western, Judeo-Christian culture than of its political or economic systems. He was an early voice exposing "Political Correctness" and "multiculturalism" as cultural Marxism, Marxism translated from economic into cultural terms largely through the work of the Frankfurt School.

Mr. Lind also served for eight years as Associate Publisher of *The New Electric Railway Journal* and is co-author of a series of studies on conservatives and public transportation.

ON WAR #29

How NOT To Use Light Armored Vehicles

By William S. Lind

8-13-03

One day in the late 1970's, when I was a defense staffer for Senator Gary Hart, I got a call from an Armed Services Committee staffer asking if I knew anything about Light Armored Vehicles (LAVs), which are what we used to call armored cars. A bit, I replied. What did I think of them, he asked? I said I liked them for operational maneuver, because they are wheeled, and most operational (as opposed to tactical) movement is on roads.

That was the beginning of the Marine Corps' LAV program. We soon roped in a one-star at Quantico named Al Gray, and within a few years the Corps had some LAVs. The concept for which they were purchased was very clear: to form soviet-style Operational Maneuver Groups for use against Third World countries. We all knew that LAVs are tactically fragile, and must be used in ways that avoid heavy combat. We also knew that the tank the U.S. armed forces were then buying, the M-1, was too heavy and used too much fuel to be able to maneuver rapidly over operational distances. The LAVs could fill the gap.

As one of the *Urvater* of the Marines' LAV program, I was pleased to hear a couple years ago that the Army was now also planning to buy LAVs. Good, I thought; they too have recognized that the M-1 is more a *Sturmgeschuetz* or a *Jagdpanzer* than a real tank, and they need something else for operational maneuver. {Editor's note: these are also known as "tank destroyers." See, for example, <http://www.achtungpanzer.com/pz10.htm>.]

I should have known better, given that we are talking about the U.S. Army. Nonetheless, it was with disbelief, then horror, that I learned what the Army was really buying LAVs (called Strykers) for: urban combat. And now, the first Stryker units are to be sent to Iraq.

The magnitude of the idiocy involved in using Light Armored Vehicles in urban fighting, where they are grapes for RPGs, is so vast that analogies are difficult. Maybe one could compare it to planning a fireworks display on board the Hindenburg. Urban combat is extremely dangerous for any armored vehicle, including the heaviest tanks, as the Israelis can testify after losing several Merkavas in the Gaza strip (to mines—real big ones). Why? Because for opposing fighters, regular infantry or guerillas, the old sequence from the German "men against tanks" is easy. The sequence is, "blind 'em, stop 'em, kill 'em." Armored vehicles are already blind in cities, because distances are short; the safest place near a hostile tank is as close to is as you can

get, because then it can't see you. Stopping is also easy, because streets are narrow and vehicles often cannot turn around. And with LAVs, once they are blind and stopped, killing is real easy because the armor is, well, light. That's why they are called Light Armored Vehicles.

In the first phase of the war in Iraq, the jousting contest, the Marine Corps lost M-1 tanks and it lost Amtracks, its amphibious personnel carrier. But it lost no LAVs. That is a testament, not to the vehicles, but to how they were employed.

But now, in the second phase of the Iraq war, and in future phases as well, there will be no role for operational maneuver. And there will be no role for LAVs or Strykers. If the Army insists on sending them into Iraqi towns and cities, they should first equip them with coffin handles, because all they will be is coffins for their crews.

When I first came to Washington in 1973, I was quickly introduced to an old saying about the American armed forces: the Air Force is deceptive, the Navy is dishonest, and the Army is dumb. It seems some things never change.

ON WAR # 20

Lies, Damned Lies And Military Intelligence

By William S. Lind

June 11, 2003

It is now evident that Saddam Hussein's possession of vast quantities of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) is about as likely as Mars having canals, complete with gondolas and singing gondoliers. Remember, it wasn't just a couple of stink bombs we accused him of possessing. According to data compiled by columnist Nicholas Kristof, the governments of the United States and (once) Great Britain told the world that Saddam had 500 tons of mustard and nerve gas, 25,000 liters of anthrax, 38,000 liters of botulinum, almost 30,000 banned munitions and the tornado that abducted Dorothy. So far, all we have found is two empty trailers. Presumably, American troops had sufficient time to paint over the "Allied Van Lines" logos.

Since Saddam's WMD were one of the principal stated reasons for this strategically curious war, their absence is something more than a social faux pas. Were the American and British publics, as Pat Buchanan puts it, lied into war? If they were, it would not be the first time. In Britain, the practice goes back at least as far as the 18th century and the War of Jenkin's Ear. Americans were lied into World War I by cartoons of German soldiers bayoneting Belgian babies and into Vietnam by a Tonkin Gulf torpedo boat attack that never happened.

There are, of course, other possibilities. It may have been simply an intelligence failure. That is the least disturbing possibility, because the others are worse.

One is that someone in the chain of military intelligence deliberately cooked the books. If they did so, it was probably to curry favor with their political and budgetary masters, who let it be known what "findings" they wanted. This sort of corruption is now endemic in Washington. Virtually every Federal agency, including the armed forces, have accepted the rightness of doing and saying anything to get money. Budget size is the universal measurement of success, and whatever pleases those who allocate funds is wholesome and good. What John Boyd said of the Pentagon is now universal: "It is not true they have no strategy. They do have a strategy, and once you understand what it is, everything they do makes sense. The strategy is, `Don't interrupt the money flow; add to it.'"

Another possibility is more disturbing still, and regrettably I have to say I think it is a certainty. Those who use military intelligence do not understand what it is.

Throughout history, in virtually every conflict, a universal law has applied. That law says that when it comes to military intelligence, whatever you think you know is incomplete, and some of it is wrong. You don't know what you don't know, you don't know how much you don't know, and you don't know what part of what you think you know is wrong.

As part of the so-called "Revolution in Military Affairs," which promises to turn war into a video game, many intelligence users, both military and civilian, have come to think of military intelligence as "hard data." RMA touts have long and loudly promised perfect information, on both your own side (in war, just knowing what your own forces are doing is difficult) and the enemy. The military talks about "information dominance" (for just a few more billions), which somehow suggests one of our attractive female officers, dressed in a natty leather outfit, serving as the G-2SM, the Information Dominatrix.

It may be -- though I doubt it -- that our intelligence agencies really believed Saddam had all that stuff. But even if that is what they reported to the decision-makers, the decision-makers should have known better to swallow it. If they did not know that, they are not fit to be making military decisions. They lack the most basic understanding of the nature of military intelligence, a nature no technology can alter (and can easily make worse, by making the errors more convincing).

The upshot is that we went to war and wrecked a country over something that, barring an unlikely revelation, was not true. The American people don't seem to care. Perhaps they expect to be misled by their government, or, more likely, they have just changed the channel.

But the rest of the world does care. The international credibility of American assertions based on military intelligence is now zero. When we make claims about other countries -- as we are now doing about Iran -- not a soul will believe them, even when they happen to be true. At this point, Americans should not believe them either.

Footnote: The U.S. is now moving rapidly to relocate its forces in South Korea well to the south of the DMZ. I suspect the real reason is to move them out of range of North Korean artillery. At present, if we launch airstrikes on North Korea, Pyongyang can respond with a massive, World War I-style artillery bombardment of U.S. ground troops that could kill thousands. The sudden withdrawal of Americans to positions south of the Han river reveals our intention to go after North Korea's nuclear and missile facilities. A possible North Korean riposte: demand Japan expel all American forces or kiss Osaka goodbye.

ON WAR # 19

The Men Who Would Not Be King

By William S. Lind

3 Jun 2003

Normally, the position of Chief of Staff of the Army is the ultimate brass ring an Army officer can hope to grab. There is no higher Army job, and merely holding it guarantees a man at least a small place in the history books -- though not necessarily a favorable one. In fact, the last Army Chief of Staff to merit Clio's praise was General "Shy" Meyer, who held the post twenty years ago. Since he left, the Army has been stuck in a Brezhnevite "era of stagnation."

It is therefore surprising that at present, no one seems willing to take the job, nor the position of Vice Chief. Both current incumbents leave this summer, and instead of the usual line of hopefuls standing hat in hand, the eligibles have headed for the hills. Rumor has it they may have to recruit the hall porter and the charwoman.

The interesting question is why. Part of the answer is Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. To put it plainly, Rumsfeld treats people like crap. Working for him is like working for Leona Helmsley, except that Leona is less self-centered. Unless you are one of his sycophants, equipped with a good set of knee-pads and plenty of lip balm, you can expect to be booted down the stairs on a regular basis.

Truth be told, some senior officers deserve to be treated that way, because that is how they always treated their subordinates. But Rummy does not discriminate between perfumed princes and the real thinkers and leaders. He has driven more than one of the latter to hang up his hat in disgust, to his service's and the nation's loss.

But that is not the whole story. Part of the reason no one wants the Army's top job are two fundamental contradictions in the Administration's policy toward the Army. Unless they are resolved, any Army Chief of Staff will find himself in a difficult position.

The first contradiction is that the Administration puts the Army last in line among the services at the same time that it is getting us into wars only the Army can fight. We are already fighting one Fourth Generation war in Afghanistan, we are becoming enmired up to our necks in another Fourth Generation war in Iraq, and we are sticking our noses into still more in the Philippines, maybe Indonesia, and possibly Iran.

Only the Army can fight Fourth Generation war, to the degree anyone can (and no one really knows how). The Navy is irrelevant, the Air Force almost irrelevant, and the Marines want to get in and get out, fast, while Fourth Generation war plays itself out with agonizing slowness. Volens nolens, the Army is left holding the bag.

Logically, that should make the Army the Administration's focus, its Schwerpunkt. Instead, OSD is in love with the Air Force, to the point where it wants to make the Army into a second Air Force, waging the high-tech, video-game warfare that exists only

in the minds of children and Pentagon planners.

That leads to the second contradiction. The Army needs and has long needed genuine military reform. Reform means such basic changes as adopting Third Generation, maneuver warfare doctrine and the culture of decentralization and initiative that goes with it; instituting a radically different personnel system that creates cohesive units, eliminates the bloat in the officer corps above the company grades and suppresses rather than mandates careerism; making free play training the norm rather than a rare exception; and getting rid of dual standards for men and women.

Secretary Rumsfeld also preaches reform, but what he means by reform is just more of the high-tech illusion. Again, the Air Force is the model: the more a system costs and the more complex it is, the better it must be. The result is absurdities such as the Stryker, where Light Armored Vehicles, which are wonderful for operational maneuver, are instead to be used for urban combat where they will be instant coffins for their crews, and the Future Combat System, a conglomeration of robots, tanks, drones and kitchen sinks that surpasses anything envisioned by Rube Goldberg. Meanwhile, the real reforms so badly needed go unaddressed.

In the face of all this, becoming Chief of Staff of the Army is somewhat less enticing than becoming mayor of Baghdad. But at the same time, it leaves the troops desperately in need of not just a Chief of Staff, but of a highly talented and morally courageous Chief of Staff, someone who can defend his men against the follies emanating from the civilian side of the Pentagon. Those who know him believe the current Vice Chief, General John M. "Jack" Keane, is such a man. Some think he could be the Army's Al Gray, the reforming Commandant of the Marine Corps of the early 1990s who left an enduring and powerful legacy. So far, General Keane is refusing the job, on the legitimate grounds of his wife's health problems. Many are praying he will reconsider. If the job goes instead to one of Rummy's lickspittles, God help our soldiers.

ON WAR # 18

Of Time And The Rivers

By William S. Lind

May 29, 2003

Whether the leaders and theoreticians of Fourth Generation forces such as al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah have heard of John Boyd, I do not know. It would not surprise me if they have; they generally seem to make better use of open-source intelligence than do America's high-tech, closed-system intelligence agencies. [see Blaster #438]. In any event, like Boyd, they do understand that war is conducted in time as well as in space, and that time is often the more important dimension.

A recent article in The American Conservative is titled, "God's Time: The Afghan war is over when the Afghans say so." The author, Jim Pittaway, makes the point that Fourth Generation, non-state Islamic forces have a wholly different view of time than does America. Of Afghan guerrillas fighting the Soviets in the 1980s, he writes,

For more than a decade, they had been enduring the privations of life in the bush, organizing defenses, and preparing strategies that would ultimately lead them to success against the overwhelmingly superior forces of a global superpower ... this idea of being on "God's time" led to an extraordinary degree of patience...

The same is true now that many of these same Fourth Generation fighters face American opponents:

As surely as the American soldiers and society will want to win and go home, these men do not need victory or closure in any comparable sense in order to justify their ongoing fight ... Adversity, discouragement, and setbacks are never defeat; defeat is an epistemological impossibility except in the event that one ceases to believe ... It is not his job to drive the "coalition" out; his job is to make them pay. Allah will see that they are driven out when it is his will to do so.

War on "God's time" has already fought us to a stalemate in Afghanistan, with very little fighting. Our puppet government in Kabul has failed to extend its authority beyond that city. Indeed, last week's mob assault on the American embassy, sparked by the mistaken killing of four Afghan Army soldiers by Marine embassy guards, shows that its ability to control its capital is shaky at best. The promised American "rebuilding" of Afghanistan has become a stale joke, because without security, nothing can be rebuilt. And America hasn't a clue on how to provide security in Afghanistan.

Or Baghdad, for that matter. Now, having found that M-1 tanks make poor police patrol cars, we are proposing to put a lot more American troops on Baghdad streets, in Humvees and on foot. Welcome to my parlor, say the Ba'athist and Shiite spiders

to the fly. One RPG round will incinerate any Humvee, and foot patrols will be even easier game. When that happens, we will be back in the tanks, and someone else will control the streets. We could have used Iraq's own army for that purpose, but instead we have sent it home, without pay, providing a vast reservoir of fighters for our enemies. America's "plan" for occupying Iraq seems to have been to identify every possible mistake, then make it.

The American authorities in Baghdad claim to be restoring order, getting the economy moving, fixing the infrastructure, etc., but the Iraqi people don't seem to see any of it. We begin to sound like Saddam's Minister of Information. In fact, if he's still around, perhaps we should hire him. Already, American casualties are rising. Instead of bringing the troops home, we are sending in more. Those are not the usual signs of a war won.

In the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates, time belongs to our opponents, not to us. We, not they, need closure. Our time is determined by American election cycles. They operate on "God's time." If they do not win today, or even fight today, there are many tomorrows—for them, but not for us. If Iraq is still a mess and there is no end in sight a year from now, George Bush is in trouble.

The fly has occupied the flypaper. And time is always on the flypaper's side.

ON WAR # 14

Don't Take John Boyd's Name In Vain

By William S. Lind

Some senior American military officers and a number of military commentators are now saying that America's swift victory in the first phase of the war with Iraq shows that the U.S. armed forces have learned the lessons John Boyd tried to teach them. As someone who knew and worked with John Boyd, I have to say, not so fast. There is a lot less here than meets the eye.

Col. John Boyd, USAF, was undoubtedly the greatest military theorist America has produced. An important part of his theoretical work dealt with what is known as maneuver warfare or Third Generation warfare. Boyd argued that in any conflict, each side goes through repeated cycles of Observing, Orienting, Deciding, and Acting, Boyd's famous OODA Loop. Whoever can consistently go through the OODA Loop faster than his adversary gains a decisive advantage. This concept explains how and why maneuver warfare works, how it "gets inside the other guy's mind," as Boyd liked to say.

Supposedly, the U.S. military got inside the OODA Loop of the Iraqi armed forces during the recent campaign, thereby proving that they can do maneuver warfare. This claim is, at best, premature. At present, we do not know why the Iraqis did what they did, especially why the Republican Guard went home rather than fight for Baghdad. Nor do we know how our own forces actually operated. A few preliminary reports suggest the 1st Marine Division may indeed have followed maneuver warfare concepts, echeloning its forces, using mission-type orders, bypassing enemy strong points to keep up the speed of the attack, etc. One of the Marine Corps' premier maneuverists, Brigadier General John Kelly, is the Assistant Division Commander of 1st MAR DIV, so this is not entirely surprising. In fact, 1st MAR DIV also followed maneuver warfare precepts in the first Gulf War, under a very talented commander, General Mike Myatt.

But one division's actions by no means prove that the Marine corps as a whole has successfully internalized maneuver warfare. Nor does it say anything about the Army's performance. The Army's Third Infantry Division, the campaign's focus of effort (Schwerpunkt), did move quickly. But a Second Generation force can also move quickly, if and when it has planned to do so. What it generally cannot do is move quickly in response to unexpected threats and opportunities. It does not have the cultural characteristics required to do so, qualities John Boyd stressed such as decentralization, initiative (and the tolerance for mistakes that must accompany initiative), trust up and down the chain of command and reliance on self-discipline rather than imposed discipline. Those characteristics are mighty hard to find in today's United State's Army.

More fundamental still is the point that while the OODA Loop was an important part of Boyd's work, there was a great deal more to what John Boyd said and did than the OODA Loop. For example, we are now told that America's armed forces simply cannot be challenged by any state opponent on air, land or sea. What would John Boyd say to that? I can tell you because I often heard him say it. "When we went into Vietnam, I heard the Pentagon say that if you have air superiority and land superiority and sea superiority, you win. Well, in Vietnam we had air superiority and land superiority and sea superiority, and we lost. So I said to myself that there is obviously something more to it."

Another of John Boyd's most important contributions to military theory was his observation that war is waged at three levels, the physical, the mental and the moral. The physical level is the weakest and the moral level is the strongest, with the mental in between. How would Boyd assess our performance thus far in terms of his three levels of war? If we could ask him, I think his assessment might go something like this:

At the physical level, we won. At the mental level, we just don't know yet, because we don't know what was going on in the other guy's mind. At the moral level, we did good by getting rid of Saddam. But now the hard part comes. Remember, these three levels have to work in harmony. If we come across as the bully, pushing everyone else around not only in Iraq but all over the world, it isn't going to work. If we don't let the people of Iraq run their own country, we're going to lose at the moral level, and then we will lose at the mental and physical levels too. We'll end up giving ourselves the whole enchilada right up the poop chute.

Some of the same generals who are now claiming that our initial victory in Iraq shows we have mastered John Boyd's theory feared and hated the real John Boyd. For them now to take Boyd's name in vain would not have made John happy. I can guess what he would have said, but I can't put those words into print.

ON WAR # 10

The Duke Of Medina Sidonia

By William S. Lind

31 March 2003

In planning a war, the most important task is to understand what can be planned and what cannot. In general, the initial disposition of forces can be planned, and it must be planned with great care. As Field Marshal von Moltke said, "A mistake in initial dispositions can seldom be put right." But Moltke also said, "No plan survives its first contact with the enemy." Once you cross the enemy's border, you have to adjust and improvise constantly. The conduct of war, as distinct from preparation for war, is (Moltke again) "a matter of expedients." Count von Schlieffen thought otherwise, and in the famous Schlieffen Plan he attempted to extend the logic of railway mobilization planning into the campaign itself. Not surprisingly, the result was failure and, for Germany, a lost war.

A second planning error is to make the war plan depend on a single assumption. Here, the Spanish Armada provides an example. The single assumption on which the Armada depended was that the Spanish commander in the Netherlands, the Duke of Parma, would somehow get his own army to the sea and out into the English Channel, where the Armada would protect its crossing. The Armada's commander, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, did everything he was expected to do. He brought his fleet into the Channel in splendid order, ready to convey Parma's troops. But Parma never came. All Medina Sidonia could do was try to get home (he made it, with his flagship and a goodly portion of his fleet).

Yet a third error in planning is to assume that the enemy will fight the way you would. The classic example here is Napoleon's march to Moscow. Napoleon knew he would have fought a great battle to keep the enemy from taking his capital. But Tsar Alexander did not do that (he fought at Borodino, but was careful not to let his army be destroyed there). He let Napoleon take Moscow, moving the Russian army east and south. Then, he waited. Baffled, Napoleon had no choice but to march back the way he came -- losing nine-tenths of his army in the process.

How does our current war with Iraq look, if we examine it in light of these three errors in military planning?

Regrettably, not very good. Normally, the American military can be counted on to plan initial deployments thoroughly, and, once again, it did. But the Pentagon threw the plan out at the last minute, resulting in chaos. James Kitfield wrote in the March 28 National Journal,

"By far the most dramatic and disruptive change to the battle plan, however, was Rumsfeld's decision last November to slash Central Command's request for forces...Notably, the Pentagon scrapped the Time Phased Force Deployment Data, or "TipFid," by which regional commanders would identify forces needed for a specific campaign, and the individual armed services would manage their deployments by order of priority."

This mess was multiplied by the Schlieffen error: we had a rigid plan for the campaign itself, and did not adjust it despite changes in the situation. Specifically, when the Turks said no to the passage of American forces through Turkey, putting an end to the planned northern front, we continued with the rest of the plan as if nothing had changed. The result at this point is a campaign that looks like a balloon on a string, with a single Army division (about 3,500 combat troops) deep in Iraq and a slender thread of a supply line connecting it to its food, water, fuel and ammunition. The First Marine Division is slowly putting itself in the same situation. No classical strategist can see the picture without his hair standing on end.

On top of all that, like the Armada, our plan depended on a single assumption: that the Iraqis would not fight. Unfortunately, they are fighting, leaving General Franks in the position of the Duke of Medina Sidonia. One division was enough to accept the surrender of Baghdad, but one division is far from enough to take Baghdad. One hates to say so, but the fact that the Iraqis are fighting has caused our initial campaign plan to collapse.

Finally, we seem to have assumed that the Iraqis would fight as we would, relying primarily on their heavy armor units. Instead, they have fallen back on the age-old Arab tradition of light cavalry warfare, directed against our rear. Arabs have a dismal record in tank battles, but at light cavalry warfare, they are quite good. We might recall that an Englishman named Lawrence used Arabs that way against the Turks, with pretty decent results.

The pitfalls in planning a war or a campaign are many. History does, however, warn us what some of them are. Perhaps it is time for Clio to ask Mr. Rumsfeld why he fell into three of the most obvious anyway.

ON WAR #9

No Exit

By William S. Lind

March 26, 2003

In June of 1944, when Field Marshal von Rundstedt, the German commander in France, was told that the Allies were landing in Normandy, he knew exactly what to do. He went out into the garden and pruned his roses.

Von Rundstedt knew that in war, early reports, regardless of whether the news is good or bad, are usually misleading. Reacting to them with "instant analysis" merely makes the problem worse. That is as true for the war in Iraq as for any other war. For now, we need to wait. Only time can offer clarity. What we can do now is discuss possibilities.

I see three broad, possible outcomes to this war. None of them is good. The first and worst is that our current advance on Baghdad proves to be a trap. We get there, our 350-mile single supply line is cut, and the 3rd Infantry Division, which is the spearhead, is forced into a desperate retreat or even surrender. Could it happen? Yes. As the Iraqi leadership seems to understand, a modern defense does not try to keep the enemy out. Rather, it seeks to suck him in, then cut him off. This type of defense was first developed by the German army during World War I (early critics called it the "let them walk right in defense"), and it was the standard German defense during World War II. The key element, the counterattack by armored forces, will probably be impossible for the Iraqis because of air power. But there are other ways to cut a supply line. This outcome is disastrous in both the short and long terms. Short-term, we lose an army. Long-term, the Islamic world gets what it might see as its biggest victory since the Turks took Constantinople in 1453. It would be an enormous shot in the arm for every Islamic jihadi, and would lead to a collapse of America's position throughout the Islamic world, and perhaps elsewhere as well.

The second broad possibility is that we take Baghdad, replace Saddam with an American-approved pro-consul, then watch Iraq turn into a vast West Bank as non-state elements take effective control outside the capital city. This is what has happened in Afghanistan, and in Iraq too we would quickly find that our state armed forces do not know how to fight non-state opponents in Fourth Generation war. This outcome is good short-term but—as Israel can attest—a bloody mess in the long-term.

The third possibility is what the adventurers who now run American foreign and defense policy seek: we take Baghdad, liberate Iraq and turn it into a modern, peaceful democracy. The probability of this happening makes a snowball's chances in Hell look pretty good, but even if it does, it too is a long-term disaster. Why? First, because democracy in the Islamic world probably means the election of people like Bin Laden, whose campaign slogan would be, "Death to the Christian and Jewish dogs!" Second, because what the American Establishment means by "freedom and democracy" is Brave New World. And third, because the adventurers, emboldened by success, might then go on to wage war against Iran, Syria, Libya, and possibly North Korea. If their goal is American world hegemony, that goal is certain to drive everyone else into a coalition against us, state and non-

state elements alike.

In short, so long as American policy remains what it is today, the war in Iraq offers us no exit. If the adventurers were replaced by sober men, could we find a way out? Perhaps. It just might work if we took Baghdad, overthrew Saddam, and then immediately turned Iraq over to the Arab League or the U.N. to run, while making it very clear to the rest of the world that America's quest for world hegemony is over, finished and done. A good way to put it might be, "a republic, not an empire." Meanwhile, let us all pray that possibility number one does not come to pass, and that our friends over there doing the fighting—and I have many—come home to us whole, safe, victorious and soon.

ON WAR # 8

Hippos Can't Tap Dance

By William S. Lind

March 19, 2003

The March 16 Washington Post outlined what it believes to be the current plan for a war with Iraq. In a piece subtitled "Bold War Plan Emphasizes Lightning Attacks and Complex Logistics," the Post quotes an unnamed general as saying, "We literally could be in Baghdad in three or four days." In an obvious reference to the German Blitzkrieg style of warfare, the article goes on to say that the ground forces coiled in Kuwait—including the 3rd Infantry Division, the 101st Airborne Division and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force—anticipate attacking with Patton-like audacity. Roughly 350 miles of road separate the northern border of Kuwait from Baghdad, and substantial mechanized forces are expected to be on the outskirts of the Iraqi capital within a few days...

Two particular risks come with this war plan, one obvious, at least in part, the other subtle. The obvious risk is that U.S. forces will have a 350-mile supply line. That supply line is a lucrative target for anything and everything, ranging from guerilla war through counter-thrusts by Iraqi armor to attacks by chemical or biological weapons.

While the risk here is obvious, there is a dimension to it that is not—because "Political Correctness" forbids talking about it. In today's U.S. military, the supply line is full of women. History suggests that if rear-echelon units, where women may make up 20% or 30% of the personnel, are attacked, two things will happen, then a third. The two things are, first, the women will panic, and second, the men will forget about their mission in order to rescue and comfort the women. Both acts are built into human nature, and no military regulations or orders can overrule them. The third thing that will happen as a consequence of the other two is that the rear area will dissolve in chaos.

An interesting if little-known military fact is that, from the days of the Greek phalanx onward, most military units that collapse do so from the rear forward, not from the front back. If the American supply line deep inside Iraq collapses, so will the combat forces up front, in part because they will run out of fuel and bullets and in part for psychological reasons. Simply put, when you feel cut off you want to run away, and sometimes you do.

The subtle risk that comes with this Blitzkrieg-type war plan is that Blitzkrieg requires a Third Generation, German-model military and America has Second Generation, French-model armed forces.* Directing Second Generation forces to do Blitzkrieg is asking hippos to tap dance. They may want to, but they just can't.

The problem is that fast-moving warfare requires fast decision-making, not just rapid movement by columns of armored vehicles. Unless everything goes exactly according to plan—and wars seldom do—commanders at every level must adapt often and rapidly. But our hierarchical, process-oriented military decision process, dominated by vast staffs, misleading virtual realities and political generals, does not permit local commanders to adapt. As is essential in Second Generation warfare, the duty of commanders at all but the most senior levels is to follow the plan. At those most senior levels, a cynic might suggest that the main question is whether Saddam's political generals are even worse than our own.

Through all the years when the military reformers were attempting to lead America's armed forces from the Second Generation of modern war into the Third -- and, sadly, failing—I warned that you cannot take the head of one and put it on the body of the other. You cannot give a Second Generation military a Third Generation, maneuver warfare plan or doctrine and expect it to execute. Third Generation armed forces are radically different as institutions: in their personnel systems, their training, their manpower and promotion policies, their institutional cultures (the best book on the subject is Martin van Creveld's *Fighting Power*). Yet, if the Washington Post account is accurate, that is now what the Administration has ordered its armed forces to do.

Unless the enemy does not fight, or fights according to our plan, the result is likely to be watching hippos try to tap dance. It won't be pretty. Footnote: The same issue of the Washington Post reported on a new, "mysterious, sometimes fatal pneumonia-like illness" that poses "a worldwide threat after spreading from Asia to Europe and North America." This may or may not be the first attack by the 21st century's most deadly weapon of mass destruction, a genetically engineered disease. Even if it is not, it is a timely warning about how some Fourth Generation opponents are likely to counter America's vaunted "technological superiority." As I have said before, war is a two-way street.

* First Generation warfare relies on massed manpower; Second Generation on massed firepower. Both First and Second Generation warfare are essentially linear. Third Generation warfare shifts to non-linear tactics based on speed and flexibility. Fourth Generation warfare is also non-linear; the fighting is conducted by non-state forces unbound by the rules of conventional warfare. However, the strategic objectives of Fourth Generation warriors extend beyond mere terrorism, which is only a technique.

ON WAR # 7

Some German Lessons

By William S. Lind

March 12, 2003

Between 1809 and 1945, the Prussian and, later, German armies developed what is often called maneuver warfare of Third Generation warfare. For the past quarter century, the U.S. military has been trying to adopt this German way of war, and failing. Instead, we now appear to be copying two fatal German mistakes: thinking that a lower level of war trumps a higher, and initiating a war on two fronts. There are several ways of defining levels of war. One is John Boyd's trinity of moral, mental and physical. Another is the more traditional strategic, operational and tactical. One of the reasons Germany lost both world wars was that she thought operational excellence would trump strategic failure. In reality, a higher level of war always trumps a lower.

America seems now to have taken this German error and extended it. The present American way of war assumes that superiority at the tactical (or perhaps merely technical) level, manifested in high technology, will overcome massive failures at the strategic and moral levels. Strategically, a war with Iraq will help, not hurt, our real enemies, non-state forces such as al-Qaeda. Morally, we are launching an aggressive war against a weak enemy for no clear reason. Putting the two together leads to self-isolation, which is exactly what happened to Germany. The notion that Wunderwaffe will somehow overcome isolation and strategic failure will prove as viable for Washington now as it did for Germany in 1944-45.

Not content with duplicating just one fatal German mistake, we are moving to add a second by getting into a war on two fronts. Our eastern front may be Korea. The situation there is steadily getting hotter, and Washington's response so far has been to pretend it is not happening while saying Kim Jong II is a nut case.

Strategically, what North Korea is doing makes perfect sense. North Korea knows it is part of the "axis of evil," and it sees the United States preparing to attack another member of that axis, Iraq. The same voices in Washington that have demanded war with Iraq are beginning to make noises about Iran, accusing it of attempting to develop nuclear weapons and suggesting it should be next on the hit list. If I were a North Korean general, I would certainly assume an American attack is at some point a very real possibility, perhaps an inevitability.

On that basis, North Korea has decided it needs one of two things: a formal, legally binding non-aggression pact with the United States, or nuclear weapons. Washington has turned the idea of a non-aggression pact down flat, which can only lead to greater fear in Pyongyang. So, North Korea is going to build nukes. What other choice does it have?

Everyone in the region—Russia, China, Japan and even South Korea—is desperately urging Washington to talk with North Korea. Washington continues to refuse. Adding fuel to what may soon become a conflagration, President Bush last week spoke openly about the possibility of a military "solution" to the problem of the North Korean nuclear weapons program. Far from solving anything, such an action would probably give us a two-front war.

As was the case with Germany, a war on two fronts would leave the American military stretched dangerously thin. Our war plan for Korea assumes South Korea will carry the main burden of a war while Japan offers safe logistical bases. But those assumptions could prove wrong. North Korea has indicated it might attack American forces in the region while offering peace

with South Korea; the new South Korean president has said that if the U.S. and North Korea went to war, South Korea might offer to mediate. A North Korean threat of a nuke on Osaka might lead Japan to declare neutrality, in which case we could not use Japanese bases. In such a situation, our options might be initiating the use of nuclear weapons or trying to stage a Dunkirk. Either one would be yet another strategic disaster.

It would be an historical oddity if the United States, having failed to copy the Germans in what they got right, instead duplicated what they got wrong. In view of the almost lighthearted military optimism that currently prevails in Washington, one cannot help remembering Marx's comment about history occurring as tragedy, then repeating itself as farce.

ON WAR # 6:

A Warning From Clausewitz
By William S. Lind

An American war on Iraq now seems certain. Even if Saddam Hussein agrees to step down and go into exile, it is not clear that Washington would forgo the occupation of Iraq and the installation of an American military government. Wilsonianism is in full flower, in what is likely to prove a false spring. As we watch events unfold, it may be useful to keep two points in mind. First, the center of gravity of this war—the place or places where a decision is likely to occur—are not in Iraq. As is also true of the war in Afghanistan, the centers of gravity of a war with Iraq are in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Of these three, Pakistan is the most important.

Strategically, Iraq is not a key to very much. One might argue that as Iraq goes, so goes Syria, but that is not saying a lot. Iraq is not a key to Iran; on the contrary, their rivalry goes back centuries. All Iraq means to Turkey is an increased threat of an independent Kurdish state and maybe a chance to grab Iraq's northern oil fields. The notion that an American-conquered Iraq can blossom into a Swiss-style democracy that will remake the Middle East comes from Cloud Cuckoo Land. If you want to see what democracy in that region would really mean for American interests, look at the Turkish parliament's vote this weekend against allowing U.S. forces to invade Iraq from Turkey. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in contrast, are keys to many other things. Pakistan has nukes, Saudi Arabia controls world oil prices and Egypt offers

Israel its only hope of some kind of (temporary) deal with the Arabs. If the pro-western regime in any of those nations falls, we will have suffered a strategic disaster. If they all go, our position in the region will collapse. The central strategic question, therefore, is what effect an American attack on Iraq will have on the stability and tenure of the Pakistani, Saudi and Egyptian regimes.

That leads to point number two: if and when American forces capture Baghdad and take down Saddam Hussein, the real war will not end but begin. It will be fought in Iraq in part, as an array of non-state elements begin to fight America and each other. It will be fought in part in the rest of the Islamic world where the targets will not only be Americans but any local regime that is friendly to America. And, of course, it will be fought here in America, as the sons of Mohammed remind Americans that war is a two-way street.

This kind of war, Fourth Generation war, is something American and other state armed forces do not know how to fight. It is not going to go well, and among the casualties are likely to be the pro-American governments in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In short, an American victory over the state of Iraq (which is itself no sure thing) is more likely to lead to a strategic failure for America than to a strategic success. In a somewhat more famous On War, Clausewitz wrote:

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and Commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking: neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

With the invasion of Iraq, Washington is trying to turn a Fourth Generation war, a war with non-state entities, into a Second Generation war, a war against another state that can be conquered by the simple application of firepower to targets. If Clausewitz were still with us, I suspect he would warn that we are marching toward Jena*

Jena was the battle where Napoleon decisively defeated Prussia in 1806.

ON WAR # 5

War Against Everyone, Everywhere?

By William S. Lind

February 25, 2003

In what increasingly appears to be Washington's war against everyone, everywhere, 3,000 American troops are now in the Philippines where they are to fight a small Islamic rebel group called Abu Sayyaf. Abu Sayyaf is supposed to have about 200 fighters; an American victory would seem to be assured.

But here is where we are likely to find that war is changing. When the U.S. Army was fighting Philippine insurgents a hundred years ago, the Philippine forces tried to fight stand-up battles, copying the Western way of war. Not surprisingly, they lost.

I suspect Abu Sayyaf will address the problem differently, in a way that reflects non-Western approaches to war. If they do, we are likely to see a conflict that unfolds along the same general lines as the war in Afghanistan— which is not going well (by some reports, we have been forced out of five forts on the Afghan-Pakistan border; we have admitted the loss of one).

What will happen? First, when the Americans appear, Abu Sayyaf will disappear. They will refuse to engage us, and simply blend back in to the civilian population. The American way of war, which is Second Generation warfare, is based on putting fire on targets. Abu Sayyaf will respond by making itself untargetable.

Second, Abu Sayyaf will wait. It will know that time is on its side. Why? Because it lives there, and we will eventually go home. But its waiting will be watchful waiting. It will watch our forces to determine their patterns of operation—what they do, and when and how they do it. Second Generation warfare tactics are formulistic; they follow set patterns (which really means our Second Generation military confuses tactics with techniques). That makes us predictable—the same thing that led to our humiliation in Mogadishu.

Once Abu Sayyaf has determined our patterns, it will move to take advantage of them. It will not offer us the stand-up battle we want; it will still try to remain untargetable. But we will suffer from a landmine here, an ambush there, a grenade tossed into a humvee somewhere else. We will begin taking casualties. But each time we reach out and try to grab them, we will come up with a handful of air.

Abu Sayyaf may never escalate beyond this sort of petite guerre, as it used to be called. The U.S. will not lose, but neither will it win. And as the conflict continues, Abu Sayyaf will take advantage of the greatest recruiting tool it was ever given: our presence. To Philippine nationalists, we will be foreign invaders. To Islamics in the southern Philippines, where Abu Sayyaf operates, we will also be Christian dogs, crusaders. To everyone, even the local people fighting against Abu Sayyaf, we will gradually become bullies, as we fight a weak enemy with attack helicopters, jet aircraft with smart bombs, the whole panoply of American firepower (the best book on that subject, *Firepower in Limited War*, makes one basic point: don't use it).

What if we get lucky and take out the leadership of Abu Sayyaf? New leaders and different organizations will take up the fight. In the Philippines as elsewhere, the spread of Fourth Generation warfare (remember, America's armed forces are still stuck in the Second Generation) means more and more people are transferring their primary loyalty away from the state to other entities and causes. For those new loyalties, they will fight.

If America is going to send in Marines or Special Forces against all Fourth Generation forces it can find, we will indeed find ourselves fighting against everyone, everywhere (keep your eyes on Columbia for the next round). Washington fails to see the danger because Washington defines the problem as merely "terrorism." Terrorism is only a technique, and what we are really facing is the greatest change in warfare since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 gave the state the monopoly on war it is now losing.

Remember, if you don't get the question right, your answer doesn't matter.

ON WAR # 4

Is Washington Playing At War?

By William S. Lind

February 12, 2003

When I had lunch last week with the thoughtful foreign policy columnist Georgie Anne Geyer, the first thing she asked me was,

"Can you make any sense out of what is going on?" I assured her that, like most of the people I know, I could not. Washington seems hell-bent on war with Iraq, and nobody (including my friends in the military) understands why.

Secretary of State Powell's speech to the U.N. did not answer the question. Considering that we are talking about war here, the grounds he offered for it were trifling. It brought to mind the War of Jenkins' Ear, when in the 18th century England declared war on Spain over the ear of a British merchant captain named Jenkins, supposedly sliced off his head by a Spanish coast guardsman (Jenkins presented the ear, pickled in a bottle, to Parliament). After the war was over, no one really understood why it had been fought.

The mismatch between causes and means raises a deeply troubling question: is Washington playing at war? Make no mistake: war is the most perilous and unpredictable of all human endeavors. Playing with war is more dangerous than playing with fire, because fire can usually be contained; war, too often, cannot. Wars have an unpleasant habit of evolving in ways that none of the participants anticipated. When, in the summer of 1914, Europe resounded with cries of "A Berlin!" or "Nach Paris!", no one imagined the Somme, or Verdun, or the starvation blockade of Germany that killed 750,000 civilians.

The sense that Washington is playing at war is strengthened if we analyze the politics. If the Bush Administration were in desperate political trouble, one could at least see a rationale for a wild gamble on war. But politically, the Administration could hardly be riding higher. It just gained strength in Congress in an off-year election, a rare event. Bush's poll numbers are more than comfortable. Yet the White House is risking it all on a single throw of the dice. If this war goes badly, it is the end of George W. Bush and any hope of a Republican ascendancy for the next twenty years. Our next President might well be Hillary Clinton.

Mr. Rumsfeld recently said that a war with Iraq would be over in six days or perhaps six weeks; it almost certainly would not last six months. Here, too one senses someone playing at war. What if Iraq fights in the cities, where the built environment negates "hi-tech" weaponry? What if we take Baghdad, only to have a suitcase nuke go off in Seattle? What if Willie says to Joe, "Hey, Joe, you got a case of the sniffles?", and we find thousands of our troops dying from a genetically engineered disease? All these possibilities are quite real. But the War Party in Washington dismisses them with a shrug.

If anyone should be cautious about playing at war, it is conservatives. The greatest conservative catastrophe in the 20th Century was World War I. The three conservative monarchies that had kept the poisons of the French Revolution in check through the 19th century, Russia, Prussia and Austria, were all swept away by that disastrous war. As the Marxist historian Arno Mayer has correctly argued, the result was a vast spectrum shift to the left. Before World War I, America and France, because they were republics, represented the international left. By 1919, they represented the international right, not because they had changed, but because the world had shifted around them. The reason Americans today find themselves living in a moral and cultural sewer, is, in the end, World War I.

Then, too, in that fateful summer of 1914, governments played at war. Austria saw a chance to restore her image as a Great Power. Russia perceived an opportunity to take revenge on Austria for her humiliation in the Bosnian Annexation Crisis of 1908. The Kaiser, rightly, told the Chief of the German General Staff, Moltke the younger, that he wanted to stay on the defensive in the west and attack in the east, which would have kept Britain out of the war. Moltke collapsed on a couch and said it could not be done (the plans were actually in the file), and the Kaiser gave in. Everyone agreed that the troops would be home before the leaves fell.

Four miserable years and millions of dead later, the Kaiser was an exile in Holland, the Tsar and his family were dead and Austria-Hungary had ceased to exist. The British empire had bled to death in the mud of Flanders, and on the streets of Paris, there were no young men. The future belonged to people no one had ever heard of, Lenin, Hitler and Stalin.

If there is a game conservatives should never allow their government to play, it is playing at war.

ON WAR # 2

Will The Enemy Fight?

By William S. Lind

February 4, 2003

Last week, I looked at the moral level of war from the American perspective. Now I want to turn the telescope around: how

does this war look at the moral level—the highest and most powerful level of war—from an Iraqi perspective?

Of course, I have to speculate: Iraq is not big on opinion polls. But the question is important, because it relates directly to whether or not Iraqis fight us when we invade their country. The key to our almost bloodless success in the first Gulf War was the fact that the most Iraqi soldiers did not fight (the Republican Guard did, but we did not encounter many Guard units). Make no mistake: if the Iraqis do fight this time, the second Gulf War will be very different from the first.

Washington is so confident that the Iraqis will not fight that our operational plan depends on them not doing so. We will invade Iraq with a force as small as two Army divisions and one division from the Marine Corps. That is enough Americans to take Iraq's surrender, but nowhere near enough to defeat Iraq if Iraqis fight (which also says that our operational plan is very fragile.). Washington's reason for believing the Iraqis will not fight is moral: Saddam is a tyrant, and many, perhaps most Iraqis hate him. They will welcome as liberators anyone who promises to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

That may prove correct. But counting on it could prove dangerous. Many Iraqis may feel, "Yea, Saddam is an SOB, but at least he is our SOB." Not without reason, Iraqis may see our invasion having more to do with oil than with spreading democracy. Nationalism and tribalism may also work for Saddam, as many people unite to fight a foreign invader. After all, an earlier Saddam Hussein named Joe Stalin was also a tyrant. Many Russians hated him. Many welcomed the Germans and even fought for Germany against the Soviet Union. But enough Russians stayed loyal for Stalin to win that war.

We also need to ask, "Which Iraqis are we talking about?" The Kurds, in northern Iraq, are unlikely to fight for Saddam, unless he seems to be winning. Their real fear, in any case, is ending up inside Turkey after Iraq breaks apart. In the south of Iraq, the Shiites have suffered heavily under Saddam; they may welcome us, or at least stay neutral.

But Iraq's real military, the Republican Guard, is made up almost entirely of Sunnis from the middle of the country. By saying we will bring democracy to Iraq, we are also saying that we will throw the Sunnis out of power, since they are a minority. In a country like Iraq, if you lose political power, you lose everything else too, including maybe your life. My bet is that the Sunnis will fight us. If they fight us in the cities, this will not be an easy war. Perhaps the most important question, looking at the moral level of war from the other side's perspective, is not what Iraqis think, but how this war will look in the larger Islamic world. Here, the U.S. has some important strikes against it, even if no one loves Saddam. We are a powerful country attacking a weak country (and offering no credible reason for doing so). We are a rich country bringing more misery to a poor country. We boast that because of our technology, we can wage a war in safety, killing other people while taking no risks ourselves. And we are seen as a Christian country (would we still were) attacking a Moslem country.

This could bring us serious trouble in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere. The most critical place to watch is Pakistan. If the current pro-American government of Pakistan is ousted and replaced with one aligned with Islamic non-state forces against the West, the whole American position in the region will collapse. Osama or his buddies will have nukes and the most competent conventional armed forces in the Islamic world. If that occurs, we will have lost even if we take Baghdad and hang Saddam Hussein from a sour apple tree.

One vignette of how this war may look from the Sunni Iraqi perspective comes from an incident in the first Gulf War, told to me by a U.S. Marine who witnessed it. The Marines were attacked by a small unit of the Republican Guard. They shot up the lead Iraqi personnel carrier, which caught fire. The Republican Guard infantry poured out of it on fire, and assaulted the Marines as they burned. One Iraqi was shot numerous times, but did not fall. A Marine finally brought him down with a football tackle and beat out the flames on his back. With the American Marines standing around him, the Iraqi sat up and said in perfect English, "I am thirsty, and I love Saddam." And he died.

I guarantee you that those Marines respected their enemy. Before this is over, Washington may come to do the same.

"[The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation](#)" by William S. Lind, Colonel Keith Nightengale (U.S. Army), Captain John F. Schmitt (U.S. Marine Corps), Colonel Joseph W. Sutton (U.S. Army), and Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson (U.S. Marine Corps Reserves). Marine Corps Gazette. October 1989.

"[Fourth Generation Warfare: Another Look](#)" by Lind, Schmitt, and Wilson. Marine Corps Gazette. December 1994.

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ON WAR # 1

Can A Government Wage War Without Popular Support?

By William S. Lind

January 28, 2003

Beginning this Tuesday, January 28, 2003, I will offer an "On War" commentary each week until the Iraq business is over and done. I suspect that may be awhile.

Who am I? At present, I am a center director at the Free Congress Foundation. But in 1976 I began the debate over maneuver warfare that became a central part of the military reform movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The U.S. Marine Corps finally adopted maneuver warfare as doctrine in the late '80s (I wrote most of their new tactics manual).

In 1989, I began the debate over Fourth Generation warfare—war waged by non-state entities—which is what paid us a visit on September 11, 2001. The article I co-authored then for the Marine Corps Gazette was formally cited last year by al Qaeda, who said, "This is our doctrine." My Maneuver Warfare Handbook, published in 1985, is now used by military academies all over the world, and I lecture internationally on military strategy, doctrine and tactics.

In this series, I propose to look at what is happening—with Iraq, North Korea, Afghanistan and other outposts of the new American imperium—from the standpoint of military theory. Hopefully, that will enable us all to make sense out of the bits and pieces we get each day as "news." One of the most important things military theory offers to this end is a framework developed by Col. John Boyd, USAF, who was the greatest military theorist America ever produced. Col. Boyd said that war is fought at three levels: moral, mental and physical. The moral level is the most powerful, the physical level is the least powerful, and the mental level is in between. The American way of war, which is Second Generation warfare—there will be more on the Four Generations of Modern War in future commentaries—is physical: "putting steel on target," as our soldiers like to say.

But how does the coming war with Iraq look at the moral level? Here, the U.S. seems to be leading with its chin. Why? Because the Administration in Washington has yet to come up with a convincing rationale for why the United States should attack Iraq.

The argument that Iraq, a small, poor (it didn't used to be, but it is now), Third World country halfway around the world is a direct threat to the U.S.A. is not credible. Yes, Saddam probably has some chemical and biological weapons. But few tyrants are bent on suicide, and the notion that he would use them to attack the United States, except in self-defense, makes no sense. Nor does it seem likely he would give them to non-state actors like al Qaeda—again, except in self-defense—because non-state forces and Fourth Generation warfare are as much a threat to him as to us.

It is of course true that Saddam is a tyrant (his model, by the way, is obviously Stalin, not Hitler). So what? Mesopotamia has been ruled by tyrants since before history began, and it will be ruled by tyrants long after North America is once again tribal territories. The last President who tried to export democracy on American bayonets was Woodrow Wilson. That's one of the reasons he counts as America's worst President, ever. Very few people, in America or the rest of the world, wish to see us revive the practice.

Most importantly, the real threat we face is the Fourth Generation, non-state players such as al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc. They can only benefit from an American war against Iraq—regardless of how it turns out. If we win, the state is further discredited in the Islamic world, and more young men give their allegiance to non-state forces. If Saddam wins, their own governments look even less legitimate, because they failed to stand with him against the hated Crusaders. A recent cartoon showed Osama bin Laden, dressed as Uncle Sam, saying, "I want you to invade Iraq!" Undoubtedly, he does.

So what is the real reason for this war? Oil? Revenge for Saddam surviving the first Gulf War? Israel? The ordinary Americans I know are wondering, because the reasons stated by the Administration don't add up.

Military theory says that, in a democracy, a government cannot successfully wage war unless the war has popular support. In turn, a war cannot obtain popular support if the people do not understand why it is being fought. Today, the people, at home and overseas, do not understand why America wants to go to war with Iraq. That means the Administration is losing this war before the first bomb is dropped.