



The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century

T. X. Hammes

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David's sling-and-stone fight against Goliath isn't that far from Iraqi insurgents fighting against coalition forces. While the Department of Defense (DOD) continues to build a high-tech American military to win wars against other, albeit second-tier, Goliaths, insurgents have adopted and are practicing sling-and-stone, low-tech, fourth generation warfare (4GW). These 4GW warriors rely on networks of people over networks of state-of-the-art, high-tech weapons.

Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, USMC, explores the evolution and current practice of 4GW. DOD's focus on high-tech drives its doctrine, organization, training, and education to teach people to take advantage of technology not to think about, fight, and win wars, says Hammes.

Just as the world has evolved from an industrial society to an information-based society, so has warfare. Information collection against today's threats requires a greater investment in human skills. Technology by itself is not the answer. The U.S. defence establishment's failure to address the importance of human knowledge over that of technology leaves us unprepared to deal with the kind of wars we are fighting today and those we are most likely to face in the future fourth generation wars.

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