Journal of Slavic Military Studies, 20: 147–158, 2007

ISSN 1351-8046 print
DOI: 10.1080/13518040701205878

BOOK REVIEW

Vladimir Slipchenko and Makhmut Gareev. *Future War*, Vladimir Slipchenko and Makhmut Gareev, Budushchaya voyna. Moscow: Polit.ru OGI. 2005, 138 pp., ISBN 5-94282-345-6, 84 rubles.

Jacob W. Kipp
School of Advanced Military Studies, Eisenhower Hall,
Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 66027

Future War (*budushchaya voyna*) by premier Russian military authors and theorists, Vladimir Slipchenko and Makhmut Gareev, is an interesting and curious book.[1] Its interest lies in the topics of the lectures delivered by Slipchenko and Gareev and the commentaries made on each by selected attendees. The lectures were delivered in November 2004 and March 2005.

In a recent article on this book the reviewer spoke of the contrast between the general tendency of warfare in the 20th century to become more global, destructive, and precise in nature under the impact of technological change and the rapid evolution of the current war in Iraq from its high-technology phase into "the phase of the Berdanka," a reference to the first mass-produced breech-loading rifle issued to the tsarist army in

The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the views of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

[1]Vliadimir Slipchenko & Makhmut Gareev, *Budushchaya voyna* [*Future War*]. (Moscow: Polit.ru OGI, 2005). There are several curiosities concerning this book, which are worth mentioning. First, the volume is laid out as a pamphlet for a large readership and is described as part of project of "public lectures" organized by Polit.ru. Second, the volume has an introduction but no editor is listed. Third, the book is part of series which the press describes as " a mass-political edition." Fourth, the book contains an incomplete introductory essay to Gareev's lecture (pp. 77–81), which seems designed to reframe Gareev's basic argument and introduce the main themes of the following discussion. Fifth, the back plate of the book contains the claim that the recent wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq were launched to test advanced weapons and not their proclaimed objectives.

1870 and used by a wide range insurgents thereafter.[2] This contrast between high-tech warfare and insurgency occupies a prominent place in this book. The title of the book is no accident. *Budushchaia voyna* was also the title of a work by the Polish banker and railroad magnate, Jan de Bloch, written over a century ago at the very beginnings of mass, industrial war.[3]

In the post-Soviet experience of the 1990s senior Russian military theorists called for a reassessment of Bloch's predictive efforts as a paradigm for the future development of Russian military science[4] In this case, the authors and discussants are trying to deal with warfare in the information age, the place of non-contact warfare and insurgency in the future of warfare, and Russia's own response to the current international security environment. Unlike Bloch's work, which contained a warning to statesmen that a general European war fought with industrial means and mass armies could turn into a stalemate that would consume armies and fracture societies making war the catalyst of revolution, the current essays warn of the complexity of high-technology warfare and debate both the threats before Russia and the nature of the preparations required for future conflicts. There is no common line here, and the authors' perspectives are quite distinct.

In another review of *Future War* under the title "Alliance Belarus-Russia: Future War," Arkadiy Medvedev recounts Slipchenko's argument for the emergence of sixth- generation warfare, "non-contact, long-range, precision warfare," which Medvedev describes as a product of civilization's

[2]"Berdanki protiv vertoletov. Knigi," [Berdan Rifles against Helicopters. Books] *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, (16 December 2005), p. 8. This reference to an ancient rifle relates counter-insurgency to Russia's frontier wars and not terrorism. In Russia's case, whether imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, or modern Russia, the preferred weapon of terrorist attack has been the bomb, or IED, i. e., that combination of high explosive and electrical current to provide safe detonation for the attacker. The consummate technician of such violence was Nikolai Ivanovich Kibalchich, who in the late 1870s organized for the People's Will numerous assassination attempts against Alexander II using dynamite and electric detonators. These attempts blew up the tsar's train and wrecked his dining room in the Winter Palace without killing the sovereign. Another IED was in place to kill the sovereign on 1 March 1881, but Alexander II another route. The final, successful attack was carried out by a hand-held devices with a conventional burning fuses. Current Chechen interest in such explosive devices, including those used in Nordost and Beslan incidents, are nothing new. The assassination of Chechen President Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov on May 9, 2004, should be seen as a continuation of a long trend in the Russian experience with terror as a tactic. There are no easy technical solutions and success depends upon isolating the terrorists from the society in which they operate.

[3]I. S. Bliokh, *Budushchaya voyna v tekhnicheskom, ekonomicheskom i politicheskom otnosheniyakh* [Future War in Its Technical, Economic, and Political Relations]. six volumes, (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya I. A. Efrona, 1898). On Bloch's contribution ot the study of future war see: Jacob W. Kipp, "Soldiers and Civilians Confronting Future War: Lev Tolstoy, Jan Bloch and Their Russian Military Critics," in: Stephen D. Chiabotti, ed., *Tooling for War: Military Transformation in the Industrial Age*. Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1996, pp. 189–230.

[4]V. D. Ryabchuk, "Nauka, obrazovanie, reforma," [Science, Education, Reform] *Voyennaya mysl'*, No. 2 (February 1994), pp. 39–41.

development. He devotes must of his attention to the fact that a state which acts independently in its own interests in world affairs can expect "contradictions and conflicts with other powers." Here he agrees with Gareev about the need to cultivate a national will and spirit to defend the country. Recalling Gareev's military service in the GPW and his reputation as a commander, Medvedev embraces a model of national defense based upon total mobilization, with the sacrifices of the defenders of Brest Fortress of 1941 as a model. "In the 21st century, there must be a connection between the people and the army so that military personnel would not be disconnected from their nation, their relatives, and their land."[5]

Both authors are representatives of an important post-Soviet phenomenon: the emergence of retired senior military officers as commentators and analysts of defense and security issues in Russia. Both men are specialists in military science and connected to the General Staff. Slipchenko, who passed away after giving this lecture, taught at the Academy of the General Staff and Gareev was head of the Directorate of Military Science of the General Staff. Gareev was born in 1923 and as an eighteen year old went of to war in 1941. Slipchenko belonged to the postwar generation of officers who joined the Army under Khrushchev. Slipchenko represents a truly independent voice, one questioning both Soviet solutions and the current anti-military tendencies in Russian society.

As the editor points out in the forward to the book, Slipchenko chose to develop a new field in post-Soviet military science, the forecasting of the character of future wars. "When he retired, Vladimir Slipchenko himself chose to be a scholar and a teacher, in order, among other things, to develop the science and be able to publish and to deliver open lecturers."[6] Over the next decade he studied and commented upon the experience of U.S. involvement in local wars as its military perfected the military art of high-technology warfare. Between 1999 and 2002, he published three books refining his analysis of sixth-generation warfare. Gareev, the senior author in age, range and service, retains special influence with serving senior military officers in the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. As President of the Academy of Military Science he leads major research projects, conducts conferences, and provides advice to the Ministry.

He is what might be called "a ring-road bandit" an analogy to his American compatriots, who from inside the beltway advise the Pentagon from a phalanx of think tanks. In the Russian case, the Academy of Military Science enjoys a prominence that would be the envy of its Washington

[5]Arkadiy Medvedev, "Soiuz belarus'-Rossiya: Budushchaya voyna," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, (19 January 2006). http://dlib.eastview.com/sources/article.jsp?id=8882626, (Accessed 21 January 2006).

[6]Budushaya voyna, p. 6.

counterparts in terms of proximity to power, if not access to resources. Although Gareev has written on the nature of future war in the 1990s, his primary focus is what could be called the theory of national defense and military art in the tradition of Karl von Clausewitz and Aleksandr Svechin.[7] During the late Cold War Gareev was an important theorist who adapted Soviet military art to non-linear warfare under the concept of the OMG (Operational Maneuver Group), which some waggish commentators referred to "*Operativnoe myshlenie Gareeva*" (Gareev's Operational Thought). Both men are part of a circle of leading military specialists, whose works have been referenced and studied by Western scholars and analysts, including this author.

The topic of Slipchenko's lecture is one familiar to any reader of his many works over the last fifteen years, the technological and military-strategic character of a new "generation" of warfare which he has defined as "non-contact war." In Slipcheko's usage "generation" applies to very fundamental characteristics of the way wars are fought. He sees really only six generations over the last 4000-plus years: edged-weapons (bronze, iron and steel), gunpowder weapons, rifled weapons, automatic and mechanized weapons, nuclear weapons, and precision-strike weapons.

I first heard General-Major Slipchenko make this point in 1991 at a meeting that I helped to organize at the U.S. Army War College on the lessons of the then, just-concluded Gulf War. In this particular case, however, Slipchenko is speaking to a select Russian audience on the implications of such "sixth-generation" warfare for Russia, the organization of its armed forces, its equipment, and the threat to the state and society. Slipchenko's basic point is that war was not abolished by the end of the Cold War but only is in a process of transformation, a transformation dominated by the shift from industrial to information societies.

For Slipchenko, the harbinger of non-contact war was the limited use of cruise missiles in the Falkland War. The Gulf War proved to be only a prototype of "non-contact war" which continued to evolve during the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century. However, not even Iraq is a full-blown manifestation of the new generation of war because only one side has had the instruments for non-contact war. The Iraqi responses from early collapse of the regular, industrial-age army followed by the emergence of multiple insurgencies represented little more than what the American defense theorists had labeled asymmetric warfare in the decade after the Gulf War.

Slipchenko, however, is not calling on Russia to prepare for some national form of asymmetric warfare. In his concluding remarks he states: "Russia needs a completely different armed forces. If today our armed

[7]On Gareev's study of future war see: M. A. Gareev, *If War Comes Tomorrow: The Contours of Future Armed Conflicts.* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

forces function in three distinct mediums, air, sea and land, what we need is two functional branches: strategic attack and strategic defense forces."

No tank armies will roll across the Russian border. The future war will involve non-contact precision strikes against the state and military control systems, communications, and economy. Preparing for such a conflict would demand a reorganization of Russian defense industries, research and development capabilities, and the recasting of Russia's armed forces to fight and win non-contact wars.

For his part, Slipchenko had predicted that the war in Iraq would a more advanced form of warfare that the United States has practiced since the Gulf War and in the Balkans. Slipchenko has not confined his observations to just U.S. experience and Russian defense requirements. In his essay, he looks at China's evolving plans for war in case of Taiwan's move for independence. Slipchenko has lectured in China and his book on sixth-generation warfare was translated into Chinese.[8] Here he speaks of the PLA's plans for non-contact warfare across the Taiwan Straits:

> **It appears that the Chinese are now getting ready for a high precision non-contact strike against Taiwan's economy. The economic potential is destroyed, the Taiwanese replace Chen Shui-bian with anyone else, the political regime changes, and Taiwan, with a ruined economy, joins China. That is the scenario being considered.[9]**

However, he goes on to suggest that China's growing economic power will over time make such a conflict unnecessary and money, not weapons, will secure what Beijing desires.

For Russia, the situation is quite different. Slipchenko's concluding point in the general discussion of his lecture returned to the threat to contemporary Russia:

> **"I may be repeating myself by saying that I specifically drew your attention to the perception of remote non-contact warfare as the mechanism of future wars in which Russia may be involved. This is very dangerous for our country. If we are not prepared for it, we will face a great catastrophe."[10]**

The discussion following Slipchenko's presentation is of interest because of the topics raised by the commentators. Iraq provided the backdrop to these comments. Vitaly Leibin, the moderator, raised three critical issues. One

[8]**V. Slipchenko, Pinyin: De liu dai zan tsun. [Sixth Generation Warfare], translated by Chung Tai Hua, (Beijing: Xinhua Press, 2004) in: The World New Military Revolution Series.**

[9]**Bubushchaya voyna, p. 72.**

[10]**Ibid., p. 73.**

concerned the persistence of local wars into the current era and the role or absence of precision weapons in such conflicts. The second concerned the critical issue of bringing about regime change after the non-contact phase of war when occupation becomes the means to ensure such change. Leibin pointed to the experience in Yugoslavia and then identified a second tool needed for victory: "in addition to military technology, political technology was also brought into play that helped to change the regime at the end of the war. High precision weapons are not going to be of much use here, and there's no such technology in Iraq. How do we master that technology, if we need to?"

The third raised the issue of the cost of advanced weapons and whether under Russia's current situation there was some way find less- expensive niche technology to counter an opponent armed with the technology for sixth-generation warfare. Slipchenko's response called for the capacity to wage global warfare as the only means to deter such opponents. He freely admitted Russia's limited economic capacity but called for rational mobilization to create such capacity over time.

In response to other questions Slipchenko discussed both the relationship between information warfare and non-contact warfare in the context of a globalized economy. He mentioned the immediate prospects of U.S. strikes against North Korea, noted China's concern for an emerging U.S. capacity to use such strikes effectively against the Chinese economy in the future but focused upon Iran as the probable target for a developing U.S. capacity for "protracted non-contact warfare" after 2010. In this context strategic precision weapons hold out the prospect of replacing nuclear weapons as a means of deterrence.

In response to other questions, Slipchenko directly addressed the problem of terrorism and the utility of precision weapons against that threat. He was not optimistic about their utility or the utility of more conventional means, which he labeled "fighting the aftermath of terrorism." To fight terrorism, he recommended other means, fighting terrorism by its own methods using Special Services and not the armed forces: "In order to fight terrorism itself, you have to penetrate terrorism's genetic structure, its DNA. And fight it there, at its inception. We don't have anyone who can fight terrorism like that. People are afraid of those methods. So we will forever be fighting the consequences of terrorism rather than terrorism itself."

Comments from the audience raised the issue of whether the war on terrorism was not a form of information warfare directed by U.S. special services to suit its national interests and objectives. While Slipchenko spoke of dangers and not threats, some commentators stressed the threats posed by the United States and others worried about China.

Returning to the issue of Russia's own strategic situation, one commentator, recalling the struggle to achieve and maintain nuclear parity with the

United States during the Cold War, doubted whether Russia could achieve such parity with regard to conventional precision-strike weapons. Slipchenko stated that Russia has the research and development capability to pursue the acquisition of such systems and has even used such weapons during the second Chechen War. The question is whether Russia has the financial resources to fund their mass production. Slipchenko stressed the need to pursue such rearmament even as Russia sought to place international limits on the acquisition of precision-strike weapons.

> **We do, after all, have certain funds for that but the money is still going to past generation warfare weaponry. We must do away with this mechanism. Then we will be United States with nuclear weapons and whatever remote non-contact weapons [we have]. The Americans are not going to attack us; they are very fearful of even a minimal strike against their territory.**[11]

The second issue discussed by Colonel-General Makhmut Gareev is Russia's own preparations for war. Gareev's essay is grounded in an historical interpretation of the conflicts of the 20th century and the persistent reality of Russia's geo-strategic circumstances. Under the circumstances of external threats on many axes, Gareev emphasizes the need for Russia to have the capacity for total mobilization for war. In this, he is close to the current leadership of the Russian military in his emphasis upon the threats to Russia. Gareev's history in this context speaks to Russia's current international situation and the appropriate response to it. While much of which Gareev spoke concerned wars of the 20th century, he did make one historical reference that had contemporary relevance. He noted the wisdom of Prince Alexander Nevsky's decision to make peace with the Golden Horde while he turned his kingdom's energies to war in the West with the Teutonic Knights. As Gareev asserts, the Tartars demanded only tribute and were not a threat to national life — "Church, language, culture or the spiritual life of the Russian people and other nations; nobody encroached on it. But the knights were following the example of the Baltic republics and Germanizing: religion was imposed, spiritual life."[12]

Gareev complains that Russian statesmen have historically placed its armed forces in unfavorable circumstances in the initial period of war. Such was the case in the Crimean War, the Russo-Turkish War, the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, World War II, Afghanistan, and Chechnya in 1994. He accuses Russia's leaders of failing to foresee the nature of the conflicts upon which they were embarking.

[11]**Ibid**
[12]**Ibid., p. 81.**

> **Even nowadays some people in our country still like to engage in political bluster. Yes, war is indeed a continuation of policy by forceful means. Politics predominates but one should never deny the reverse influence of military strategy on politics. Politics does not exist in pure form at all. Politics works only when it takes economic, ideological, and military-strategic considerations into account.**[13]

In discussing threats to Russia, Gareev admitted the reduced risk of nuclear war and general war in the post-Cold War environment but pointed to other indirect means being applied to achieve contemporary political ends — economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, information warfare — to bring about internal collapse of opposing states.

Under these circumstances, local conflicts could become local wars and potentially escalate into general war. In Russia's case the risk of foreign intervention in such conflicts could not be ignored. "There are major armed forces groups of foreign states along all our borders. The number of troops is being reduced slightly but qualitatively they are undergoing a serious transformation, with high precision weapons and much more that you have heard about."[14]

These circumstances, according to Gareev, are what define the type of armed forces Russia currently needs. The answer is modern weapons, an advanced military art to employ such weapons, and the national will to use force in defense of the country, in short, a restoration of the link between the nation and the army.[15]

His interpretation did not go unchallenged. He was accused of promoting the continuation of a Soviet military system that was a deadly burden on the state and increasingly irrelevant to the needs of the state's defense. As one of the commentators notes, Gareev's thesis made the General the primary focus of the ensuing discussion:

> **When a participant in the Polit.ru forum discusses (sic) that the subject of the lecture is Gareev himself rather than military history, he is for the most part correct. March 25 showed us the self-awareness of a man who has every reason to be understood as a representative of the army expressing its problems and an understanding of the present-day situation and its historical background. This awareness may be evaluated in different ways but we suggest that you regard this lecture in precisely this way.**[16]

[13]Ibid., p. 92.
[14]Ibid., p. 102.
[15]Ibid., pp. 102–104.
[16]Ibid., p. 80.

The discussion of Gareev's lecture was quite pointed and immediately took on aspects of a generational confrontation. His critiques accused him of championing a dying and discredited military order based upon the profligate squandering of Russian lives. Aleksandr Golts, a leading military journalist and the author of *Russia's Army: Eleven Lost Years*, put the issue clearly: ". . . we are witnessing the painful, protracted but irreversible disintegration of the armed forces model that was not even created after 1917 but as a result of the reforms of Peter the Great."[17]

That system under tsarist and Soviet power had sacrificed the national economy to the end of creating a mass army of poor professional quality and in war time had cost the state and nation millions of lives: ". . . this principle of expending manpower in the name of lofty goals has become the basis of Russian military culture."

Current Russian circumstances have dictated an end of that system. Russia cannot afford to wreck its market economy by wasting labor through conscription and the nation's demographic crisis has reduced the available pool of young men. Golts concludes that necessity has killed the old system: "The Russian Army simply has to change."

What Russia needs is a transformation to a professional armed forces that would embrace advanced technology. Golts identifies information warfare and precision strikes as the answers to Clausewitz' fog and friction, which had made war complex and risky in execution. To Golts, the answer was the retirement of hide-bound officers and their replacement by technocrats. Gareev disputed Golts' interpretation of Russian arms in the 18th century, noting its successes from the Northern War to the Wars of the French Revolution to defend the utility of a mass conscript army. Moreover, he spoke of the need for national will to support the state's defense. Gareev embraced the notion of the Army as the school house of patriotism. Without such will, weapons are useless.

Other discussants joined the two sides of this debate. The core issue became a professional versus a mass army. Maxim Shevchenko, a graduate student in history at Moscow State University, supported Gareev's point that the armed forces had to be seen as a organic part of state and society. A professional force made great sense for the United States but not Russia. A "contract army" could become a tool of competing political-economic elites doing their bidding at the expense of the nation.

Moreover, there are limits on the utility of professional forces against some, especially irregular, opponents. Shevchenko described the insurgents in Iraq as practicing "network-centric" warfare, which negates the advantages of precision strike by shifting the center of gravity from deployed units to terrorist cells operating within a society that remains

[17]Ibid., p. 107. On Golts' view of the condition of the Russian Armed Forces see: Aleksandr Golts, *Armiya Rossii: 11 poteryannykh let* [Russia's Army: Eleven Lost Years]. (Moscow: Zakharov, 2004).

opaque to the invading forces. That is the dilemma, which the Israeli Army has faced in the case of the Palestinian *Intifada*.

Shevchenko returned to the Berdanka and guerilla warfare: "A Berdan rifle is a perfectly competent weapon to beat the most high-tech opponent in a modern-day war where the human factor is the main thing. So it seems to me that for now draft or contract-based is a demographic issue."[18]

The issue of peacetime deaths in the Army and the relationship of such deaths to conscription became a bone of contention. Gareev tried to put the military's peacetime deaths in the context of other social problems — automobile accidents and deaths from alcoholism. Viktor Litovkin, a long-time correspondent for *Krasnaya zvezda* [*Red Star* — the Russian MOD newspaper], asserted the state's responsibility for loss of life in the military.. Gareev responded that "State and society are responsible for all persons."[19]

Litovkin called the entire discussion about conscript versus contract army an ideological dispute engendered by the inability of the discussants to agree upon what is the threat before Russia. He put the question at the heart of Russian statehood and nature of Russian society:

> **To return to the subject of our conversation, we need to reflect on why an army is necessary and what are the objectives of the state that is maintaining that army. Can anyone say what kind of state we have now? What is its orientation? It is a social state. Is it, forgive me for asking, building capitalism with a human face or socialism with a capitalist face? No one has said. No one has stated what our state's long-term objectives are. Who will be our friends, who will oppose us, what will be the threats against us 10, 20 and 30 years from now?**[20]

Litovkin described the issue of terrorism in much the same terms that Slipchenko had used in his presentation. Terrorists had to be defeated, but military means, while necessary, are insufficient. He spoke of struggle between East and West that pitted a rich America and a rich Europe against the great majority of humanity who see an unjust world order. Terrorists do not attack economic targets but seek to punish and wound. Russia, in its current state, belonged neither to the affluent or the wretched of the earth.

The answer to such discontent that spilled over into terrorism is, as was done by European Social Democrats after World War II, to create a global middle class with an interest in bringing about the transformation of the poor areas of the globe. "Until we do this we will face the threat of terrorist wars."[21]

[18]Ibid., p. 119.
[19]Ibid., p. 122.
[20]Ibid., p. 124.
[21]Ibid., pp. 125–126.

As to the army which Russia needs, Litovkin responded that it had to be a contract-professional force because high technology weapons required such a force. Litovkin stressed the absence of imminent threats to Russia, but stressed the need to create a modern army or within 15 years Russia would have no means with which to fight.

On the issue of the threat of terrorism, Gareev took issue with Litovkin's analysis. Terrorism as a phenomenon does not exist. "It really is, as we say, an instrument." Citing his own experience with the *basmachi*[22] in Central Asia, Gareev claimed that terror was a weapon exported to Russia from without. The war in Chechnya was 99% the result of foreign intervention. He advocated a demarche against those states he identified as supporting terror in Chechnya — Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia and others. In the discussion that followed it became clear that Gareev assumed Russia was surrounded by a hostile world.

As one commentator put it, this issue of worldview divided Gareev's audience and precluded any agreement. Sergei Kotelnikov commented on the very nature of the discourse and the underlying assumption behind Gareev's concerns: "It seems to me that Gareev has been insisting on one simple idea. Guys, we have been under siege for at least 300 years and no one wants to discuss this! Or they think this is some kind of nonsense or are coming across this idea for the first time?[23]

This leads Kotelnikov to a second point: such a state of besiegement requires that the state possess the means to mobilize the society. But the issue remains for what and against whom. In his final remarks Gareev returns to issue of state ideology:

> **First and foremost we should develop a common language. Even though our Constitution says that we should not have a state ideology, not a single society, not a single country can live without a clear-cut idea. So it is up to the leadership of the country, up to our creative intelligentsia, political scientists, and other scholars. It is a task for the public. Soldiers cannot come up with goals by themselves; they live for the benefit of society, or at least that's the way it should be. So that is our common task.**[24]

[22]Basmachi is a Russian term, taken from Turkic, to refer to "bandits" who fought both tsarist and Soviet power in Central Asia between 1916 and 1939. *Basmachestvo* refers to the local resistance movements of the period, which Soviet official history defined as "counter-revolutionary robber bandits." On Gareev's service in Afghanistan see: Makhmut Gareev, Moya poslednaya voina: Afghanistan bez svoetskikh voisk. (Moscow: INSAN, 1996), and Makhmut Gareev, Afganskaya strada. (Moscow: INSAN, 2002).

[23]Ibid., p. 135.

[24]Ibid., pp. 137–138.

Gareev's plea for a "clear-cut idea" should not be seen as a matter of nostalgia for Communism. It speaks to a longer tradition of state-directed political, economic, and social development that dates back as far at Peter the Great. Mobilization for the struggle against external and internal threats has been the capital task of the state apparatus. Russian liberal ideas have always had to contend with the impulse for state-directed development, and military necessity has been an inherent part of such an ideology, one that transcends ethno-nationalism to embrace imperial order. The West has been for three centuries the source of the economic impulse for transformation, but the state-building apparatus has seen economic gains as means to national power.

Putin certainly sees integration into the global economy as in Russia's interest. But order trumps liberal values outside the realm of economics. President Putin has himself called the end of the Soviet Union a great tragedy and made rebuilding state power a central point of his presidential administration. The issue for Russia since Peter the Great has been the relationship between state and society. Statism and militarism have been common ideological themes under tsarism and communism and always at the expense of the autonomy of civil society. Under the contradictory demands of information warfare and the struggle with terrorism, the answer seems to be to invest in the technologies for non-contact warfare even as the state adapts other means of control to defeat the terrorist threat. The post Cold-War era has ended and Russia stands now in a pre-war era, uncertain about the opponent and unprepared to wage the war that Slipchenko envisions.

At a time when U.S. military theory and practice have focused on counter-insurgency operations for good and legitimate reasons, it is of value to consider the parameters of this Russian debate. Russian forces have their own rich and practical experience in conducting a wide range of counter-insurgency operations. A long war in Afghanistan and an equally long war in Chechnya represent only recent examples. But as this debate suggests, Russia has not rejected the prospect of larger war fought with advanced weapons. At least one theorist seems to be suggesting, like Bloch, that past experience with advanced technologies and their applications in military art are only precursors of the truly revolutionary potential of such weapons systems to transform warfare.