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The Future of War

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The Ivan Bloch Commemorative Conference on "The Future of War" was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, 24-27 February 1999.¹ The conference celebrated the 100th anniversary of the May 1899 General Peace Conference, The Hague, Netherlands, and Ivan Bloch's 1898 study, *The Future of War in its Technical, Economic and Political Relations*.²

The conference, organized by the Dutch Foundation for War Studies, focused on the future of the international system, with debate centered on such perceptions as "anarchy," a "clash of civilizations" and a "new world 'disorder.'" Conference workshops included topics such as "War in European History, 1899-1999"; "The Transformation of the International System"; "The Transformation of War"; and "The Future of Political Violence."

Speakers and presenters included John Keegan, Defence Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, London; Lawrence Freedman, Professor of War Studies, King's College, London; Sir Michael Rose, former commander of the UN Protection Force, Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, London; Martin van Creveld, Professor of History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem; Edward Luttwak, Senior Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.; Sergei Karaganov, Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Russia; Robert Bunker, Fellow, Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the US Army; William Church, Center for Infrastructural Warfare Studies, San Francisco; Maria Pinto, University of Minho, Portugal; and Kong Fannong, former director, UN Division of Technical Cooperation Policy, Beijing.

Topics of Discussion

Key topics and points raised included the following:

- The expansion of the concept of information operations or infor-

mation warfare expands the current battlespace without appropriate treaty definitions. Information operations upset the offense-defense status quo of defensive domination and promote instability in the international relations system.

- Ready access to information and information technologies, coupled with the ability to communicate globally via the internet, fax and other media, now provide terrorists in the Middle East new tools for targeting, fund raising, propaganda, dissemination and operational communication.

- Nongovernment organizations (NGOs) focus their attention on wars between poorly organized belligerents, including substate entities. NGO relief activities generally have the same consequences as United Nations Relief and Works Agency activities; they perpetuate the materiel and motivational sources of war. However, NGOs lack the inherent security of state-sponsored and multilateral relief entities. Hence, if threatened, they purchase security from local armed bands. By so doing, the NGOs serve to sustain armed bands, enhancing and prolonging their ability to continue fighting one another. Somalia is the classic example.

- We cannot expect peacekeeping forces to deliver warfighting goals. Peacekeeping forces are not mandated, trained or equipped to do so. As new circumstances arise, the UN must continue refining peacekeeping doctrine to incorporate the latest lessons from peacekeeping missions around the world. Surveillance, precision-guided weapons and communication technologies must be improved to ensure we can, if not compete with, at least keep up with the media's communications developments. The international community should con-

sider defining training standards, necessary equipment holdings and logistic facilities that relate to new operational circumstances in the same way NATO does. An "inspectorate" should enforce these standards for peacekeepers so those "offered up" for peacekeeping duties are provided troops and equipment capable of performing the tasks given.

- Cyberspace is a higher dimension of battlespace that provides new warfighting capabilities which overcome the limitations of traditional four-dimensional battlespace based on space (x,y,z) and time (t). Two of these operational capabilities, termed bond-relationship targeting and cybershielding, appear to be more advanced than *Joint Vision 2010* concepts of operation. These operational concepts are not detached from soldier-on-the-ground warfighting, rather they are specifically developed with future urban conflict in massive slums in mind.

- The 300-year association of war primarily with the type of political organization known as "the state"—first in Europe, then expansion into other parts of the globe—seems to be coming to an end. If the last 50 years or so provide any guidelines, future wars will be overwhelmingly of the type known, however inaccurately, as "low intensity." Both organizationally and in terms of equipment at their disposal, the world's armed forces must adjust to this situation by changing doctrine, eliminating much of their heavy equipment and becoming more police-like. In many countries the process is already well under way.

- The revolution in military affairs (RMA) does not offer the prospect of a virtual war, detached from the things people fight about—territory, prosperity, identity, order, values. It is not the case that in

the information age only information matters.

Statements of Contention

There were two specific statements made during the conference of special note. While reading excerpts about the recent revolution in military affairs from Liang Qiao and Xiangsui Wang's book, *War and Violence in the Globalization Era*, Kong Fannong stated that little thinking was going into Chinese RMA efforts.³ That is an inaccurate statement—the Chinese, in fact, have RMA-focused journals. Fannong's statement, immediately corrected by three members of the audience, might have been an innocent mistake, or it could have been made for other purposes.

Sergei Karaganov's statement came during the part of his presentation which dealt with the expected "line in the sand" theme concerning

potential NATO expansion into critical Russian areas of interest. His statement hinted at the threat of cooperation disengagement with NATO if this took place. His unexpected statement concerned Russian internal affairs. He said that if the process of fragmentation and economic crisis in Russia does not stop in the next year and a half, his country would become a failed state and the largest source of instability in the world. Karaganov had made a similar statement in Moscow at another public meeting just before this conference but with the addition of urgent calls for Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin to step down in favor of Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov.⁴ Whether Russia is indeed on the path to becoming a failed state, whether a power play is being made to place Primakov in office or whether both events are taking place is unclear. *MR* □

NOTES □

1. Selected proceedings from this conference will be published in either anthology or book chapter form by Kluwer Law International. Information concerning this publication can be obtained by contacting The Foundation for War Studies via e-mail at <pvk.project@tip.nl>.

2. See also Ivan Stanislavovich Bloch, *Is War Now Impossible? Being an Abridgement of The War of the Future in its Technical, Economic and Politics Relations* (Modern Revivals in Military History, Ashgate Publishing, Brookfield, VT, 1991).

3. Publication information not available.

4. See *International Herald Tribune*, Saturday-Sunday, 27-28 February 1999.

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