



*Changing Character of War Centre  
Pembroke College, University of Oxford  
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**Strategic Planning, Situation Centres and the Management of Defence in Russia: An Update**

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After long delay, the Russian Law on Strategic Planning was finally signed into law by President Putin in June 2014. At the second reading, more than eighteen months after the first, it was re-titled, removing the 'state' which hitherto had preceded 'strategic', to more accurately reflect the reality that the law also applied to lower-level, non-state structures.<sup>2</sup> It was made clear in the law that it would come into force from 1 January 2014 but that two years had been given to bring all existing documents of strategic planning and associated normative acts into line with the new law. A register of strategic planning documents had to be created and an information system to support the planning process, activities led by the Ministry of Economic Development (MED), since November 2016 under Maksim Oreshkin, who had previously been in charge of long-term strategic planning in the Ministry of Finance. The information system, <http://gasu.gov.ru/stratdocuments>, part of the State automated information system 'Upravlenie' (<http://gasu.gov.ru>, with its confidential subsection 'Kontur') is now operational. It already has links to a broad range of strategic planning documents, including many produced at a regional level. The register of documents now has over 54,000 items.<sup>3</sup>

From the outset the final law on strategic planning makes it clear that the activity concerns both socio-economic development and ensuring national security. It is presented as a highly structured activity pertaining to all levels of government from the federal to the municipal. It involves a wide range of actors, not only the federal government, but also the Security Council (for strategic planning in the sphere of national security), the Accounts Chamber (for monitoring the implementation of documents), ministries and departments responsible for branch-level strategic planning documents, and organs of power of subjects of the Federation. The law formalises the documents considered to be integral to the system. They are grouped by function. First there are documents setting goals at the federal level including the President's annual state of the nation speech (*poslanie*), the Strategy of Socio-economic Development and the Strategy of National Security. Second, there are documents presenting forecasts, namely a Forecast of Scientific and Technological Development, a new Strategic Forecast of the Russian Federation (about which more below), a Forecast of Socio-economic Development for the long-term, i.e. twelve years, and a similar document for the medium term, i.e. six years. Third, there are documents concerned with planning and programming, including the Basic Directions of Activity of the Government, state programmes, including the State Armament

<sup>1</sup> Julian Cooper, Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies, University of Birmingham. This paper updates the author's papers, *Reviewing Russian Strategic Planning: The Emergence of Strategy 2020*, NDC Research Review, NATO Defense College, Rome, June 2012,

<http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?icode=0> and *If War Comes Tomorrow. How Russia Prepares for Possible Armed Aggression*, White Hall Report 4-16, Royal United Services Institute, August 2016, especially pp. 38-41.

<sup>2</sup> Federal'nyi zakon 'O strategicheskoy planirovaniy v Rossiyskoy Federatsii', <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/38630>, 28 June 2014.

<sup>3</sup> <http://gasu.gov.ru/>, accessed 24 October 2018.

Programme, not previously regarded as a document of strategic planning, the long-term Budget Strategy, a wide range of branch programmes, and a strategy for spatial development. Similar documents are to be drawn up at lower levels of government but these do not include documents concerned with national security, exclusively a federal responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

It became apparent after some time that the schedule for implementing the law was too tight. In June 2016 the law was amended, postponing full implementation to the beginning of 2019. At the same time it was decreed that two of the main documents of strategic planning would be drafted before this date: a new Strategic Forecast by the beginning of 2017 and a new Strategy of Socio-economic Development by the beginning of 2018.<sup>5</sup> According to the law, the Strategic Forecast will contain an evaluation of the risks of socio-economic development and threats to the country's national security and a stage-by-stage evaluation of the likely state of the socio-economic potential and national security of the Russian Federation, together with an optimal scenario of overcoming risks and threats and an evaluation of the competitive position of the country in the world community.

It was reported in October 2016 that the Ministry of Economic Development had, with difficulty, agreed a draft Strategic Forecast to 2035 and submitted it to the government at the end of September. But it was also reported that the national security component failed to please the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff. The military, it emerged, favoured a secret document on economic possibilities of overcoming threats to the security of the country, which they considered should be spelt out in detail. It appears that the MED interpreted threats to national security in a narrowly economic manner, i.e. in terms of the level of development, investment possibilities, access to technology and the development of human capital, whereas the military wanted a broader approach taking account of possible unrest, wars and terrorism, which by their nature could only be presented in a secret document. In reality, the MED's document presented little more than a long-term forecast of the economy.<sup>6</sup> But this raises a question: why was it thought that the MED alone was qualified to present a Strategic Forecast incorporating threats to national security? It is curious that overall responsibility was not given to the Security Council, with inputs from not only MED and the MOD, but also other agencies, not least the security services.

In March 2017 it was reported that the draft 12-year Strategic Forecast had been examined by at a session of the section on strategic planning of the Security Council's Scientific Council. It had been submitted to the SC by the government for expertise. The experts involved made proposals for revising the draft to concretise in it the issue of what place Russia would occupy in the world and which risks, challenges and threats will become real in the years ahead.<sup>7</sup> In July the draft was discussed at a session of the Inter-agency Commission of the Security Council for Strategic Planning (members of which include senior representatives of the MOD, security services and the economic ministries) chaired by Nikolai Patrushev. It was reported that an amended version of the forecast would be examined at a session of the Security Council before the end of the year.<sup>8</sup> However, there is no mention of this happening in any of the brief reports that appear after a Council meeting. By November 2018, there was still no information as to whether the Strategic Forecast had been approved. It will almost certainly be classified but usually the formal approval of such documents is made public.

As for a new Strategy for Socio-economic Development, work on this started under Oreshkin's leadership, with some input from the Centre for Strategic Development (CSD), headed until recently by Aleksei Kudrin. It was the CSD which drafted the first long term strategy of this kind, the so-called

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<sup>4</sup> Federal'nyi zakon 'O strategicheskom planirovanii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii'.

<sup>5</sup> Federal'nyi zakon 'O vnesenii izmenenii v sta'tyu 47 Federal'nogo zakona "O strategicheskom planirovaniya v Rossiiskoi Federatsii"', <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/52225>, 23 June 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Dmitrii Butrin, 'Genshtab ne verit nesekretnym prognozam', *Kommersant Daily*, 5 October 2016.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/allnews/2175>, 16 March 2018; 'Sovbez RF nachal rabotu nad strategicheskii prognozom bolee chem 12 let', <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/324099>, 16 March 2018.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/allnews/2248>, 5 July 2018.

'Gref programme' of development to 2010. The principal focus of the CSD's current work in recent months has been a programme covering the period 2018 to 2024, but its website also hosted a discussion of 'Russia of the Future, 2017-2035' with a link to the government website on Strategy of Development of Russia to 2035, hosted by gasu.ru.<sup>9</sup> The programme to 2024 eventually formed the basis of a major Presidential edict of 7 May 2018, 'On national goals and strategic tasks of development in the period to 2024', setting out the principal goals of Putin's last term of office.<sup>10</sup>

The prolific production of strategic plans continues. Putin signed off the 'Strategy of Economic Security' on 15 May 2017.<sup>11</sup> By then, he had already signed off a 'Strategy for the Development of an Information Society in Russia to 2030',<sup>12</sup> a 'Strategy for the Scientific and Technological Development of Russia' (to 2035), adopted in December 2016, and a new version of the 'Strategy for National Security', adopted in December 2015.<sup>13</sup>

The next national strategic planning document will be an updated version of the 'Strategy of state national policy', originally adopted in 2012.<sup>14</sup> In October 2018 the government adopted one of its most important strategic documents, 'Basic directions of the activity of the Russian Government during the period to 2024'.<sup>15</sup> There is also a 'Forecast of socio-economic development to 2024', drawn up by the MED.<sup>16</sup> By autumn 2018, the Ministry of Finance had drafted a 'Budget strategy to 2035' but this is a brief, uninformative document, more an economic forecast than an indication of prospects for the budget system, and it looks like a purely formal implementation of an official requirement to submit a document of strategic planning.

It will be interesting to see how strategic planning develops during the rest of Vladimir Putin's final term as President. The economic and international situations remain highly uncertain and not conducive to the drafting of long-term strategic documents. The problems of drafting a Strategic Forecast suggest that there may also be institutional problems that could frustrate his evident concern to entrench strategic planning as a central focus of the institutions of power in present-day Russia. From the very beginning of his time as President, Putin has shown a keen interest in developing an institutional framework which will make possible a long-term strategic approach to ruling Russia. At almost every step events have intervened to frustrate this ambition. In current circumstances, it is difficult to conceive that this situation will change before the end of his term of office. But there is another dimension to strategic planning that, with little publicity, has been moving forward steadily and this is concerned not so much with looking to the future but managing the country on a day-to-day basis. This is the establishment of a network of interconnected situation centres.

<sup>9</sup> The government website, <http://gasu.gov.ru/strategy-2035/> and that of the CSR, <http://www.russia2035.ru/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/57425>, 7 May 2018.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/54497>, 15 May 2015. Curiously, perhaps hinting at disagreement, at the time of writing no reference to the approval of this document has appeared on the website of the Security Council, which has not included the document in its section for documents on economic security issues, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/security/economic/>. This replaces an edict of the President, then Boris Yeltsin, 'On the state strategy of economic security of the Russian Federation (basic principles)' dated 29 April 1996, a document which appears to have been influenced by the views of Sergei Glaz'ev, in 1994-95 chair of the State Duma's economic committee, already then concerned about the issue of economic security. In August 1996 Glaz'ev became deputy head of the Security Council, at the time briefly headed by General Aleksandr Lebed'. Glaz'ev resigned when Lebed' was dismissed in October 1996, but while in office he had vigorously promoted economic security and the need for criteria by which it could be assessed, an interest he has retained to the present day. See his book, *Ukrainskaya katastrofa. Ot Amerikanskoj agressii k mirovoi voine?* Moscow: Knizhnyi mir, 2015. pp. 32-57,

<http://www.glazev.ru/upload/iblock/db9/db9ed5d52445583819510b5ea70b2339.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/54477>, 10 May 2017.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41449/page/1>, 1 December 2016. In the final version reference to 2035 was dropped but it was there when the Strategy was in draft form (see the dedicated website, <http://sntr-rf.ru/>);

<http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391>, 31 December 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Natal'ya Gorodetskaya, 'Russkomu narodu nashli mesto v rossiiskom', *Kommersant*, 24 October 2018,

<https://kommersant.ru/daily/111015>

<sup>15</sup> <http://government.ru/news/34168/>, 1 October 2018.

<sup>16</sup> <http://gasu.gov.ru/GASUServicesSpring/rest/document/downloadDoc/stratplanning/112139509/Прогноз%20СЭР%20среднесрочный.pdf>, 1 October 2018.

## *Situation Centres*

An important dimension of strategic planning, as understood in Russia, is the creation of situation centres (*situatsionnye tsenry*, hereafter STs). The development of a system of distributed situation centres, charged with strategic analysis, monitoring the level of development and the state of national security, plus the determination of national priorities, formed an essential component of a Concept of National Security of the Russian Federation to 2020, set out in a classified presidential order (*ukaz*) of 12 May 2009.<sup>17</sup> The first situation centres were established in the 1990s, that of the Security Council in 1994 and the Presidential STs in 1996. More have been created subsequently by government ministries, corporate structures, the presidential representatives of the federal districts and the governors of so-called 'subjects of the federation', namely *krai* and *oblasti*. These STs tended to be developed in isolation, with different information systems, making interaction between them difficult. Dissatisfaction with this situation promoted the idea of 'distributed STs', a network of centres working to common procedures, technologies and state automated information systems, permitting their interaction to form integrated management systems concerned with socio-economic development, politics and national security.

This development was formalised in 2013 by a presidential edict (*ukaz*) and other documents, all classified, concerned with the creation of a system of distributed situation centres, in Russia known by the initials SRSTs (*sistema raspredelyonnykh situatsionnykh tsentrov*). These measures followed a Presidential assignment (*poruchenie*) of June 2011 on the preparation of proposals for the organisation of interactions of organs of state power in a SRSTs. The principal new edict was that of 25 July 2013, "On the formation of a system of distributed situation centres working to a single regime of interactions". This was followed in October 2013 by a Concept of the creation of a SRSTs and Plan of measures for its formation and functioning.<sup>18</sup>

Some details of the plan have become available. The first stage, in 2013, was to be the development and approval of a concept of information security for the SRSTs, the second, in 2014, the elaboration and approval of a uniform regime of interaction within the network of centres and general methodological recommendation for the creation of STs, plus the introduction into service of a first trial section of the SRSTs. This was to be followed in 2015 by the creation and entry into use of a Centre for management and coordination (TsUK) of the SRSTs.<sup>19</sup> The overall goals were to increase the proportion of organs of state power using STs from 30 percent in 2015 to 90 percent in 2020, and the share of state information systems integrated into the SRSTs from 10 percent in 2015 to 80 percent in 2020.<sup>20</sup> The SRSTs is designed to handle highly confidential information making information security a central concern.

The responsible body is the Federal Protection Service (FSO), which is clearly playing a major role in the development of the system, with its Service of Special Communications and Information (Spetssvyazi) of its directorate of information systems to the fore. A leading role has been played by

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<sup>17</sup> Cooper, *Reviewing Russian Strategic Planning*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>18</sup> Ukaz Prezidenta RF, 25 July 2013, no.648, 'O formirovaniy sistemy raspredelennykh situatsionnykh tsentrov, rabotyushchikh po edinomu reglamentu vzaimodeistviya'; Kontseptsiya sozdaniya sistemy raspredelennykh situatsionnykh tsentrov organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti RF, 3 October 2013; Plan pervocherednykh meropriyatii, napravlennykhna formirovaniya i obespechenie funktsionirovaniya SRSTs, 5 October 2013. Listed, <http://900igr.net/prezentaciya/obg/sistema-raspredeljonnykh-situatsionnykh-tsentrov-aspekt-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-253708/normativnye-osnovy-sozdaniya-sistemy-raspredeljonnykh-situatsionnykh-2.html>, no date.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> 'Na putinskii ukaz o situatsionnykh tsestrakh ne khvataet 1,6 mlrd rublei', [http://www.cnews.ru/news/top/na\\_putinskij\\_ukaz\\_o\\_situatsionnykh\\_tsestrakh](http://www.cnews.ru/news/top/na_putinskij_ukaz_o_situatsionnykh_tsestrakh), 20 August 2015.

Aleksei Mironov, from 2011 to 2017 deputy director of FSO and director of Spetsssvyaz.<sup>21</sup> There is an inter-agency commission for coordinating the activity of federal organs of executive power involved in the creation of the SRSTs and it is likely that Mironov plays a prominent role in its activities. The chief designer of the SRSTs is Academician Igor' Sokolov, director of the Institute of Problems of Informatics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with Nikolai Il'in, deputy chief of Spetsssvyaz', overseeing the information security dimension.<sup>22</sup> Biographical details of Il'in are sparse, but given his expertise and his post in Spetsssvyaz' of FSO, he was probably employed in the KGB. Then, in 1994 in post-Soviet Russia he proposed the creation of a STs for President El'tsin, which became functional two years later.<sup>23</sup> The overall cost of implementing Putin's July 2013 edict is not known, but according to one source in 2014 to 2017 budget funding was to be 1.6 billion roubles, but this may refer to equipment only, not the full cost of building new facilities.<sup>24</sup>

The principal focus of the SRSTs is the Presidential Situation Centre, which has recently undergone a major upgrade. There are in fact several STs in the Presidential Administration and also a number of mobile centres for use when the President is away from Moscow, but there is one main centre allowing the President to have direct contact with many other federal agencies, the federal districts and regional governments. In addition, there are STs in the Administration as such and in individual directorates, including the ones for monitoring the implementation of decisions (*kontrol'noe upravlenie*), questions of state service and personnel, and for correspondence with citizens and organisations. But the most important directorate-level NTs is that of the Security Council, one of the very first such centres created in Russia.

One STs has received particular attention since it was provided with modern, very well-equipped premises, is the Ministry of Defence's National Centre for the Management of Defence (NTsUO). Indeed, its frequent use for major meetings on defence and security matters has tended to give the impression that it is the country's principal centre of its kind (though in reality, with less publicity, this remains the Presidential Centre). The NTsUO is discussed below. Another major STs is that of the Government (STs Pravitel'stvo RF).

Other significant STs are those of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the External Intelligence Service (SVR), the Federal Protection Service (FSO), the Ministry of the Interior (MVD) and the Ministry for Civil Defence and Emergencies (MChS), which has a National Centre for the Management of Emergency Situations (NTsUKS), a distributed, multi-level centre, first established in 1993 when Sergei Shoigu was minister, and the model for the MOD's NTsUO.<sup>25</sup> Of ministries and services without major security responsibilities, leading ones with developed STs include the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Power and the Federal Customs Service. Rosatom, the state corporation responsible for civil and military nuclear R&D and production also has an elaborate system known as the Situation and Crisis Centre (SKTs Rosatoma), established by a decision of 1998.<sup>26</sup> This supports the activities of the central management structures of the corporation and provides a radiation monitoring service and support systems in the event of an emergency.<sup>27</sup> By mid-2018 STs were functioning in 17 federal ministries and agencies and a further 17 are planned.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Connect*, 2015, No.11, p.39. Mironov worked in state security organs, 1992-2007, then headed the operational directorate of FSO until 2011 when he became director of Spetsssvyaz. In October 2017 he was appointed deputy Presidential plenipotentiary to the Volga Federal District, <https://www.niann.ru/?id=514520>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Sokolov has been director of the Institute for Problems of Informatics since 1999 and was elected Academician in 2008. He is a member of the Scientific Council of the Security Council, [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Соколов,\\_Игорь\\_Анатольевич](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Соколов,_Игорь_Анатольевич)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> 'Na putiniskii ukaz'.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.mchs.gov.ru/dop/sily/ncuks>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.skc.ru/>

<sup>27</sup> 'Itogovyi obzor 2014. Konferentsiya "Sistema raspredelennykh situatsionnykh tseftrov" proshla v Voronezh', <http://xn--e1afqmbhc3a.xn--p1ai/otogovoviy-obzor-2014.html>, 18 April 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Anton Save'ev, Denis Zhurenkov, 'Situatsionnye tseftry: V Rossii segodnya', <http://www.rosinform.su/security/930028-situatsionnye-tseftry-v-rossii-segodnya/>, 4 July 2018.

The presidential plenipotentiaries have STs at their federal district headquarters, although that of the Central district was still being created in 2014 and no reference has been found to its completion. There are STs in St Petersburg (from 2006) and a steadily increasing number of other federal subjects, with plans that all will have them by 2020. Moscow does not yet appear to have a centre devoted to the management of the city, but does have STs for the underground system and road transport.

Central to the work of the SRSTs is a set of state automated information systems (*gosudarstvennyi avtomatizirovannyy informatsionnoy sistem* – GAIS) covering many aspects of the economy, society, politics and security. They provide a means of sharing a common, compatible, data base, with three different levels of openness: fully open information, limited access (official use only – *sluzhebnyy*) and data covered by the law on state secrets, the dissemination of the latter under the strict control of the FSO. According to Il'in, the intention is that all the STs 'speak in one language'.<sup>29</sup>

It is the FSO that has developed vital technologies, including highly-secure telecommunications, electronic document exchange, secure video conferencing, and various systems for information analysis. The FSO has also been developing its own information-analytical systems (IAS), including 'Monitoring the social-economic situation of subjects of the Russian Federation' (IS 'Organy upravleniya'), 'Monitoring and forecasting the situation in federal districts' ('IAS-FO'), 'Corporate system of information-analytical provision of organs of state power' ('Sistema-M'), the system of inter-agency electronic document exchange (MEDO) and secure network of video connection of organs of state power (EVKS).<sup>30</sup> The source of this list also indicates that the FSO had responsibility for the state system of detecting, warning and liquidating the consequences of computer attacks on the information resources of the Russian Federation – GosSOPKA, but this changed at the end of 2017, when a Presidential edict on the improvement of the system assigned control to the FSB and this affiliation is clear from the GosSOPKA website.<sup>31</sup>

The information is not only used for monitoring developments but increasingly for multifactor analyses of situations, modelling, forecasting and planning, with the uses of variant scenarios, all as aids to effective and timely management. An important GAIS is the above-mentioned 'Upravlenie', established following a government decree of December 2009, consolidating a wide range of information from many agencies on the economy, budgets, national programmes and projects, at federal and regional levels.<sup>32</sup> Others include the information-analytical systems (IAS) 'Protestnaya aktivnost' – monitoring popular protests and providing analyses and forecasts by subjects of the federation; 'Monitoring FO' – monitoring socio-economic development of federal districts and subjects of the federation; 'Kontrol'-UPR' – monitoring the implementation of edicts, orders and assignments and 'Sistema-M' – an information fund of printed and electronic mass media, plus various information-analytical materials. There is also EMISS, a unified statistical data base bringing together in a common format data from Rosstat and many other government departments.<sup>33</sup>

Plans for the future development of the SRSTs envisage fairly comprehensive cover of state institutions by the end of 2020. According to the schedule for their creation, during 2015-17 11 new STs were to be established in federal organs of executive power, with a further 14 in 2018-20, and for subjects of the federation the corresponding targets were 14 and 31.<sup>34</sup> The expectation is that the

<sup>29</sup> Nikolai Il'in: "Sistema STs v OGV osnova professional'nogo gosudarstvennogo upravleniya", *Connect*, 2011, no.6, p.6.

<sup>30</sup> 'Perechen' gosudarstvennykh informatsionnykh sistem', <https://ninvr.ru/about/svedeiya-o-gosudarstvennykh-infomratsionnykh-sistemakh/perechen-gosudarstvennykh-informatsionnykh-sistem/>, no date, accessed 10 October 2018; on GosSOPKA, Vladimir Dryukhov, 'GosSOPKA: to, o chem obychno molchat', <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/40284>, 5 December 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 22.12.2017 No. 620, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201712220008> and <http://gossopka.ru/>

<sup>32</sup> <http://gasu.gov.ru/> provides access to the open part of the system.

<sup>33</sup> Nikolai Il'in, 'Sistema raspredelennykh situatsionnykh tsentrov', <https://docplayer.ru/28899472-situatsionnyy-centr-prezidenta-rossiyskoy-federacii.html>, no date (Powerpoint presentation).

<sup>34</sup> <http://900igr.net/prezentaciya/obg/sistema-raspredeljonnykh-stuatsionnykh-tsentrov-aspekt-informatsionnoj-bezopasnosti-253708/normativnye-osnovy-sozdaniya-sistemy-raspredeljonnykh-stuatsionnykh-2.html>

SRSTs will lead to a significant improvement in the quality of state management at all levels, elevating the level of professionalism. According to Il'in, situation centres are the basis of science-intensive strategic management.<sup>35</sup> However, it is not at all clear what criteria are being adopted to assess the extent to which this ambitious goal is being realised.

### *The National Centre for the Management of Defence*

The best-known STs is that of the Ministry of Defence, built very rapidly in 2014 and functional by the end of that year. But it is now clear that this was not an entirely original project as it built on an earlier plan for the creation of such a centre. This was to have been the Situation Centre of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, i.e. the President. This was a proposal of 2010, apparently approved, for the reconstruction of the meeting hall of the MOD's Board at its headquarters on the Frunze Embankment. The aim was to create a centre that would facilitate the taking of managerial decisions as quickly as possible, aided by analytic support. It was envisaged that it would gather and process information of value to the Supreme C-in-C, the Security Council and the government. It would be suitable for meetings chaired by the President or the Minister of Defence and high-level inter-agency meetings, with much use of very large display screens and other visual aids, plus secure video conferencing facilities. The information base would draw on both open and classified sources. The centre would function on a day-to-day basis, in emergencies and in conditions of a transition from peace to war.<sup>36</sup> This suggests that when the decision was taken by Putin in May 2013 to build a new high-technology centre it was a development of this earlier project.<sup>37</sup>

The NTsUO has been discussed elsewhere, so here attention will be restricted to recent developments. The NTsUO is a distributed centre, with the high-profile Moscow centre as its hub. Each of the military districts now has its own regional centre of defence management: Central in Ekaterinburg, with responsibility for troops in 29 subjects of the federation plus Russian military objects in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; Western in St Petersburg; Southern in Rostov-on-Don, also covering Russian garrisons in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Armenia; and Eastern in Khabarovsk, the last to become functional in 2018.<sup>38</sup> When the NTsUO was created it appeared to be the intention to create an extensive network of territorial centres to support the work of main regional centre.

It was announced that a number of territorial centres had been established, including one in Novosibirsk and Samara.<sup>39</sup> However, since these early examples of 2014, no reference has been found to the formation of additional new territorial centre. This was explained by Mikhail Mizintsev, leader

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<sup>35</sup> Nikolai Il'in, 'Situatsionnye tsentry – osnova naukoemkogo, strategicheskogo upravleniya', [http://www.strf.ru/material.aspx?CatalogId=221&d\\_no=124362#.W9H6Q\\_ZFzIU](http://www.strf.ru/material.aspx?CatalogId=221&d_no=124362#.W9H6Q_ZFzIU), 3 November 2016,

<sup>36</sup> *Situatsionnyi Tsentri Verkhnego Glavnokomanduyushchego – prezentatsiya* (Powerpoint presentation), <http://www.myshared.ru/slide/703288>, no date but after a high-level meeting of May 2010.

<sup>37</sup> For the May 2013 decision, see Natsional'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi RF (Powerpoint presentation), <http://sneq5.com/obshchestvo/armiya/centr-upravleniya-oboronoy-rf.html>, edited 1 January 2017.

<sup>38</sup> <http://eurasian-defence.ru/?q=node/32440>, 18 December 2014; 'V Sankt-Peterburge zarabotal novyi tsentr upravleniya voiskami Zapadnogo voennogo okruga', [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-12-19/31358\\_sankt\\_peterburge\\_zarabotal\\_novyy\\_tsentr\\_upravleniya\\_voyskami\\_zapadnogo\\_voennogo\\_okrug](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-12-19/31358_sankt_peterburge_zarabotal_novyy_tsentr_upravleniya_voyskami_zapadnogo_voennogo_okrug), 19 December 2014; 'V Rostove poyavilsya Yuzhnyi regional'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi Rossii', <http://dontr.ru/novosti/v-rostove-poyavilsya-yuzhny-j-regional-ny-j-tsentr-upravleniya-oboronoj-rossii/>, 19 December 2014; Dmitrii Zubarev, 'Vostochnyi regional'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi zarabotal v Khabarovske', <https://vz.ru/news/2018/5/24/924254.html>, 24 May 2018.

<sup>39</sup> 'V Rostove poyavilsya Yuzhnyi regional'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi Rossii', <http://dontr.ru/novosti/v-rostove-poyavilsya-yuzhny-j-regional-ny-j-tsentr-upravleniya-oboronoj-rossii/>, 19 December 2014; 'V Samare pristupil k rabote territorial'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi Rossii', <https://www.nisam.ru/Zakon/V-Samare-pristuil-k-rabote-territorialnyj-tsentr-upravleniya-oboronoj-Rossii34594.html>, 31 March 2014.

of the NTsUO, who in November 2017 said that the MOD was completing work on a standard model of a centre that would be created in the regions. In 2025 a new automated system of management of the forces will come into use. This it is an evolving project.<sup>40</sup> But already it has a pyramid structure, with mini-centres of management of defence in each service and military district, giving many branch STs able not only to send data to Moscow but also to duplicate it. According to one report, in the event of a strike on the MOD's Frunze Embankment building, where the hub of the NTsUO is located, management of defence can be maintained from its many branches.<sup>41</sup>

The available evidence indicates that the technical capabilities of the NTsUO have been upgraded and that its outreach has been steadily expanding. It is known to have powerful and versatile 'programme-apparatus complex' with supercomputer provision claimed to be far superior to that of the Pentagon, with a memory of 236 petabytes and a speed of 16 Petaflops.<sup>42</sup> It is reported to engage in continuous monitoring of troop movements, the use of the country's transport infrastructure, meteorological conditions and also the output of publications, mass media and social networks. It has a computer expert system for monitoring and analysis of the military-political, socio-economic and public-political situation in the countries of the world, with automatic translation of six languages, unfortunately not identified, (with more likely to follow), and the processing of printed texts, blogs, radio and TV broadcasts in real time. It also has image identification capabilities for people and places.

It is claimed that that the NTsUO works to, and is protected by, domestically developed software, with its information system based on the Astra Linux operating system developed by the Russian company 'RusBiTekh' for the MOD.<sup>43</sup> The personnel of the NTsUO, more than one thousand military and civilian specialists, work in four shifts.<sup>44</sup> According to Shoigu, speaking in December 2016, the centre was interacting with 73 federal organs of executive powers, the organs of power of all 85 subjects of the federation and 1,320 state corporations and enterprises of the defence industry.<sup>45</sup> This extensive interaction relates to the Centre's role as coordinator of effort by many agencies to implement the Plan of Defence.<sup>46</sup>

In early 2018 it was revealed that the main halls of the NTsUO have been named after leading military leaders: Suvorov, Ushakov, Kutuzov, Zhukov, Rokossovskii, Shaposhnikov and a more recent figure, confirming his current high standing, N.V. Ogarkov.<sup>47</sup> The halls in building 17B are named after the historic figures, in 17A the four of more recent years. The rather formal large hall shown used for meetings such as the Board of the MOD, 'the hall of management named after Generalissimus Suvorov', is well known as frequently pictured in the media, but the other halls, which probably include one or more command centres, have not been shown.<sup>48</sup> After all, the NTsUO combines the functions of MOD's STs and the Central Command Post of the General Staff.<sup>49</sup> According to one

<sup>40</sup> Aleksei Zakvasin, Anastasiya Shlyakhtina, 'Kak rabotaet rossiiskaya sistema upravleniya oboronoi - dva goda NTsUO', <https://news.rambler.ru/other/35444924-kak-rabotaet-noveyshaya-rossiyskaya-sistema-upravleniya-oboronoy/>, 1 December 2016 (original RT TV).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. According to Shoigu, the speed of processing information is equivalent to 50 Russian State Libraries (the former Lenin Library, Moscow) per second.

<sup>43</sup> 'Natsional'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi Rossiiskoi Federatsii', <http://mirnoe.com/technology/4402-nacionalnyy-centr-upravlniya-oboronoy-rossiyskoy-federaracii.html>, 7 December 2016; Aleksandr Kruglov, Aleksei Ramm, 'Voennye skazali Windows "proshchai"', <https://iz.ru/688478/aleksandr-kruglov-aleksei-ramm/voennye-skazali-windows-proshchai>, 9 January 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> 'V National'nom tsentre upravleniya oboronoi proshlo rasshirennoe zasedanie Kollegii Minoborony Rossii', [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12106806@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12106806@egNews), 22 December 2016.

<sup>46</sup> 'O tsentre upravleniya oborony RF', <http://www.rosinform.ru/armiya/141104-o-tsentre-upravleniya-oboronoy-rf/>, 1 November 2014.

<sup>47</sup> 'V Moskve sostoyalos' zasedenie Kollegii Ministerstvo Oboronyi Rossii', [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12164444@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12164444@egNews), 26 February 2018.

<sup>48</sup> 'Zaly Natsional'nogo tsentra upravleniya oboronoi RF nazvali s chest' vydayushchikhsya voenachal'nikov', <https://news.rambler.ru/troops/39235113-zaly-natsionalnogo-tsentra-upravleniya-oboronoy-rf-nazvali-v-chest-vydayuschihhsya-voenachalnikov/?updated>, 26 February 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Aleksei Zakvasin, "'Nam udalos' vyrvat'sya vperyod": kak Rossiya prevzoshla Zapad v avtomatizatsii upravleniya oboronoi', <https://russian.rt.com/russia/article/454993-centr-oborony-rossia>, 1 December 2017.



authoritative source of October 2018, it now has three main centres of management. First there is the Centre for Management of the Strategic Nuclear Forces, into which is fed information from all early warning systems, and has direct links to the top military and political leadership of the country. Second, there is the Centre for Combat Management, which monitors the military and political situation in the world, analyses and forecasts threats to Russia, and manages the application of armed forces, not only those of the MOD, but also those of other 'power' agencies. Third, there is the Centre for Management of Day-to-Day Activities, which monitors all the armed forces of the country and coordinates with federal organs of power involved with defence.<sup>50</sup>

The NTsUO now has combat experience. The available evidence indicates that it has played a major role in managing the Syrian campaign, permitting direct monitoring and rapid decision making of a type simply not possible a few years ago. This includes coordination of intelligence gathering, air strikes and the transport of equipment and other resource to Syria, by sea, air and land. According to one military specialist, the NTsUO now provides an asymmetric answer US ideas of network-centric warfare.<sup>51</sup> It has also played a role in the preparation and management of recent large strategic exercises, in particular 'Zapad-2017' and 'Vostok-2018'.<sup>52</sup>

### *Echoes of the Soviet Past*

In the development of the SRSTs there is an interesting echo of past Soviet aspirations. As discussed in detail by Peters, from the early 1960s there were efforts to develop a comprehensive state automated planning and management system, OGAS (*obshche-gosudarstvennaya avtomatizirovannaya sistema upravleniya*).<sup>53</sup> This was actively promoted by the visionary pioneer of cybernetics and its application in the economy, Academician Glushkov (1923-82), director of the Kiev Institute of Cybernetics of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Notwithstanding the limits of computer technology in the USSR during the 1960s and 70s, progress was made in developing individual elements of the system but in the early 1970s the Communist decided not to back the project and its development foundered. One of the reasons was the failure of the military to support it, unwilling to share its expertise and access to advanced technology.

The pioneering role and influence of Viktor Glushkov and his OGAS project is acknowledged by Il'in, who credits him with being the first to put forward the idea of situation centres and characterises his unrealised OGAS project as 'brilliant' (*blestyashchei*).<sup>54</sup> Il'in himself was the first to put the idea into practice in more modern times, at first for helping to manage crisis situations. The possibilities were demonstrated at the time of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster (Il'in was on site as a member of the government commission) and then during the 1988 Armenian earthquake, for coping with which he created a basic situation centre.

### *Managing Russia in Troubled Times*

Why is the Russian government making the creation of a nationwide system of distributed situation centres such a priority? How does this task contribute to making strategic planning a reality, a major

<sup>50</sup> Aleksei Leonkov, 'Nash asimetricnyi otvet na amerikanskii "setetsentricheskie voyny"', <https://zvezdaweekly.ru/news/t/20181041654-460kh.html>, 16 October 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Natsional'nyi tsentr upravleniya oboronoi RF (Powerpoint presentation), <http://sneg5.com/obshchestvo/armiya/centr-upravleniya-oboronoy-rf.html>, edited 1 January 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid; Aleksei Zakvasin, "'Nam udalos' vyrvat'sya vperyod".

<sup>53</sup> Benjamin Peters, *How Not to Network a Nation. The Uneasy History of the Soviet Internet*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2017. Peters approaches the issue in terms of the Internet but more significant in this author's view was the attempt to develop a non-market economic order on the basis of advanced computerised planning and management systems, a kind of electronic socialism, an ambitious project going far beyond the development of an Internet. See also K. V. Kim, 'Razrabotki TsEMI v oblasti komp'yuterizatsii i avtomatizirovannykh sistem upravleniya ekonomikoi (1963-1985 gg.)', *Ekonomika i matematicheskie metody*, 2018, vol.54, no.3, pp.159-173 (TsEMI – Tsentral'nyi ekonomiko-matematicheskii institut, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, the principal economic research centre for computerised 'optimal planning' in the USSR).

<sup>54</sup> Il'in, 'Situatsionnye tsentry – osnova naukoemkogo, strategicheskogo upravleniya'.

goal of the country's leadership in recent years. Distributed situation centres are being developed extensively in the firm belief that they will improve the quality of state management in many spheres, in particular the economy, politics, society, defence and national security more generally. One of the problems of the Russian system of government is that the 'vertical' of power, the chains of command from the President and federal government to regions, public organisations, local government and the people at large are far from perfect and often ineffectual. As analysed by Andrew Monaghan, there has been a search at the top of the pyramid of power for means of 'defibrillating the vertical'.<sup>55</sup> The situation centres can be seen as yet another means to achieve this end, providing the centre with more detailed information on actual developments on the ground, even very far from Moscow, permitting more detailed monitoring of the implementation of decisions than was previously possible and the use of analytical aids to decision making.

But it also means that the processes of government of the country are becoming less open to the public. Interagency conferences can be held, with the participation of Putin and other top leaders, hidden from the media and public scrutiny. This probably means that the convening of open meetings is now a calculated act, with the deliberate intention to make responsible personnel at all levels, plus the public, aware that the powers that be are engaged with an issue. It also means that the range of people that Putin has active engagement with on a day-to-day basis is probably much broader than can be judged from the limited information made available on the Kremlin website.<sup>56</sup> The rule of Russia is increasingly undertaken behind closed doors, via digital means of interaction.

But there is another dimension. The increasing use of situation centres, with their rich information resources and analytical capabilities, provides a technocratic approach to management that probably appeals to many of the elite in Russia, regardless of political stance, at the present time. It also has strong echoes of the Soviet past. As noted above, in the USSR in the post-Stalin years there was some enthusiasm for 'automation', performing planning and management of the economy with the aid of computers and mathematical methods. This was often supported by economists and technical specialists of a reformist orientation, who perceived that a more technocratic approach would reduce the scope for arbitrary, subjective, decision making so pervasive in the years of the rule of Stalin and then Khrushchev.

This remains true in present-day Russia and probably accounts for the current enthusiasm for the 'digitalisation' of many spheres of life, often backed by more liberally orientated specialists, officials and political figures, such as Kudrin and German Gref. The development of a network of distributed situation centres to facilitate the management of the country is very much in the tradition and fits in well with the new national project, 'The digital economy of the Russian Federation'. However, perhaps because the development of the SRSTs is a Presidential project with a national security dimension, shrouded in considerable secrecy, situation centres are not mentioned at all in the government's basic document of strategic planning, Basic Directions of the Activity of the Government of the Russian Federation during the Period to 2024', in its section on digitalisation.<sup>57</sup>

The development of situation centres was first posed by Putin in the context of the development of strategic planning in a classified edict of May 2009.<sup>58</sup> The centres were to monitor the level of development and the state of national security, engage in strategic analysis and help determine the country's national priorities. It can be assumed that their work will assist in the elaboration of the new 12-year Strategic Forecast. But by their nature situation centres may be more appropriate to short-term management and coping with crises, as was the case when they first appeared in the USSR.

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<sup>55</sup> See Andrew Monaghan, *Power in Modern Russia*. Manchester: MUP, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Though Putin is now occasionally shown at work in his STs, e.g. on 31 October 2018, for the opening of a new diamond mine in Yakutia, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58977>

<sup>57</sup> *Osnovnye napravleniya deyatel'nosti Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2024 goda*, 29 September 2018, pp. 54-57, <http://static.government.ru/media/files/ne0vGNJUK9SQjIGNNsXIX2d2CpCho9qS.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Cooper, *Reviewing Russian Strategic Planning*, pp.4-5.

If used over a long period for monitoring and analysis, with the use of standard algorithms, modelling and other quantitative aids, there may be a danger of an avoidance of innovation, change and reform perceived as being disruptive of routine. In Russia strategic planning appears to be regarded as an instrument to secure stability, order and security, but in reality could turn out to promote the maintenance of the status quo and stagnation.

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