

Geopolitical Situation in Russia – Recent Changes and a Role of Technologies in Centralizing and Strengthening the Governance of the Military and State

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Abstract

Changes in the state governance in Russia continues. The reasons why those changes are made could be found in “Russian Doctrine” an academic work of Russian right-wing academia, which recommends establishing in Russia a new type of empire - a network based hierarchical governing system. Without publicly announcing the Doctrine as own ideological doctrine V. Putin uses it as a guidance. While restoring Russia as a global power he sees this type of governance as the best condition to maintain his own status as well. With V. Putin coming from the military organization which appreciates efficiency achieved through centralised management, synchronized activities and application of technologies, the changes are achieved by applying same principles in political statements and official documents and implemented in structural changes and applications of technologies.

KEY WORDS: *Russian Doctrine, Centralization, Synchronization, National Defence Management Centre, military reform, technologies, militocracy, Artificial Intelligence*

1. Introduction

Since V. Putin coming to the power Russia continuously undergoes changes in a governance of the state. Results are already seen. Today the country is being discussed at different forums almost every day. One has to accept that Russia was able to demonstrate more boldness and behave more provocative due to essential changes the country passed through. To get an idea why Russia does that and what she wants to achieve one needs to understand what political tasks the country is pursuing and who’s recommendations she is following.

A number of different sets of political idea, agendas, doctrines and programs were circulating in Russia since the beginning of two thousand. Among those there were ideas presented in a so called “Russian Doctrine”, a solid few hundred pages philosophical – political work produced by Russian right-wing academia representatives and presented to political audiences in 2005. Based on ideas of Russian nationalism and imperialism, the Doctrine, judging from political right perspective, provided a deep analysis of the situation and prescribed a potential future for the country. The Doctrine set main and secondary political tasks and prescribed ways to achieve all this as well. Russian Doctrine sees Russia as a great power in the future. Highly influenced by Russian tsar time philosophers like I.A. Iljin and glorifying historical past of the country the Doctrine suggests Russia becoming the state with the mission. It also recommends transferring Russian civilization into a bearer and implementer of “Holy Russia” ideas as well. Simply to say the Doctrine announced as a task to make Russia great, and provided quite a set of suggestions and recommendations how to achieve this.

As soon as “Russian Doctrine” was presented to the public, it was taken into consideration by V. Putin and his supporters. Without demonstrating too much publicly appreciations to the Doctrine, at the same time they took it as a good enough to become an ideological doctrine for the country. My personal observations convinced me that a majority of recommendations provided in the Doctrine have been used for construction of reforms, programs and plans and some are still being performed.

2. Method of Investigation

To analyze the situation and find out the answer what is happening, the systematic approach was chosen. It included usage and combination of general content analysis with comparative analysis of Russian national official and instructional documents (manuals). Systematic open source and literature review including academic works, mass media products: interviews, articles and so on was also involved.

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2.1. Analysis: Background for Changes

To understand the essence of changes which have already happened and still going to happen in Russia one needs to know what would be the end status Russia wants to achieve. A number of public statements made by president Putin and other high-level officials named as a main task to fix “a geopolitical catastrophe of dissolution of the Soviet Union” and make a new Russia as a capable power and a respected player in the multipolar world. The Doctrine states this even more precise – to make Russia as a home of Russian civilization or “Russian World”, in a form of new type of empire - a network based hierarchical governing system instead of destroyed soviet world (Russian original. „создание иерархически-сетевой социальной ткани, сетевой империи на месте разрушенного “советского мира”)[1].

The Doctrine also prescribes smaller, interim tasks necessary to achieve the main one. Those are named as getting a new harmonized political system which includes democracy (in a form of mass democracy like public referendums) and aristocracy and autocracy (Russian original. России нужно гармоническое сочетание демократии, аристократии и автократии’) [1]. Leaving, due to a scope of this article, the component of people involvement into governance (public referendums) aside, the articles concentrates on the Doctrine emphasize on a need for aristocracy and autocracy to create an efficient, centralized governing system which is following a military principal of one commander (Russian принцип единоначалия)[1]. This principal is widely accepted and used in the military. According the Doctrine application of such the principal in the non-military governance is also acceptable. This adds efficiency to the entire functioning and simultaneously shape and transfer the system into hierarchical one.

This network based hierarchical governing system requires a new type of operators. Russian Doctrine emphasizes that operators of today’s state governing systems or simply to say recent bureaucrats are not suitable for the new system. The system itself due to its networkness requires a new type of operators to be not simple performers (bureaucrats) but intelligent and creative participants. Doctrine suggest transforming bureaucracy into businessocracy (Russian original: Это делократия вместо бюрократии) [1] so consequently getting businessocrats, young technocrats, those who know technologies and are eager to implement them into a life, instead of old and stubborn bureaucrats. As of especially importance the Doctrine suggest the new system to be de-politicized. Referring to the USSR times and its governing system in which a communist party merit, a nepotism or family ties factors influenced managers and operators (bureaucrats) daily, the new system, according the Doctrine, must rely on a professionalism and intellect only.

2.2. Analysis: a New Form and Centralisation

I tend to believe that mostly due to Putin’s past and growing size of military minded people (militocracy) power it was decided to start building the network based hierarchical governing system in the military organization and according to military organization traditions at first. As a result, the first layer of this network based hierarchical governing system was created in the Ministry of Defence. Simultaneously another, similar layer had to be established using the Command and Control (C2) system of the Ministry of Emergencies. Later the same approach had to be used to build a federal government C2. All those C2 nets have been and are supposed to be integrated and interconnected and as a result an entire network would be turned into a real network based governing system which due to the principal of one commander gets hierarchic shape as well.

V. Putin pinpointed Mr. S. Shoigu, at that time the minister of emergencies and a capable representative of militocracy, to start the project in the ministry of defence (MOD). Under the new reform umbrella the MOD started rearranging and redesigning its own military Command and Control (C2). After analysing western theories about Network-Centric-Warfare (NCW) Russians found them as being applicable in Russia as well and started adopting the same to the national usage. In 2014, in the conference of Military science Academy, the chief of Russia General Staff general V. Gerasimov presented the idea for the main design. It consisted of a proposal to centralize and concentrate governance of entire state in all defense related matters in one place/structure. That structure was supposed to perform simultaneously an entire supervision of all state defense related activities and all institutions including non-military ones. It was supposed to command and control all armed forces including nuclear and other forces coming from other Russian paramilitary institutions like Russian National Guard, Ministry of Interior Affairs, FSB, etc.

Additionally, the structure was supposed to perform information collection and storage, analytical activities, forecasting and proposal developing functions as well. Next year such a structure named as a National Defence Management Centre (NDMC) was established. The centre received and today possesses huge computing capabilities and has three clone subsidiaries to back up the system in case of necessity or trouble. The centre stands at the top of the C2 spreading its tentacles horizontally to similar centres in the Ministry of Emergencies and federal institutions governments (some still have institutional Command Posts (CP)) and into lower level CPs: operational HQs in the military or regional authorities in a federal governance sense. Due to technological developments and especially

digitalisation and communications, the centre has access to the lowest levels: tactical HQs in the military or municipal authorities in the places as well. Technologies also allowed to develop the centre up to a level, then it became able to perform military Command, Control, Communications, Computing, Information and Reconnaissance (C4IR) function instead of former simple Command and Control C2 function. But the most importantly the NDMC now incorporates and can exercise this C4IR not only inside the MOD but with other 73 ministries and federal agencies as well [3].

Another particularity, while describing recent governing system, was a fact of the MOD becoming a provider of own philosophy, experience and expertise in C4IR field to other federal institutions and civilian authorities. At the same time the government was looking to expend the idea of single centres further. Under the name of project centre, and here the NDMC could be taken as a military and defence related activities project centre, similar centres had to be spread into other spheres [4]. Today the MOD is followed by the ministries of Emergency, Ministry of Interior and other state services (like Russian National Guard etc.). As it was mentioned, all they remain integrated into the NDMC network which still remains as the main “entire state ruling” centre. As one of the best followers from Federal institutions pool to get that philosophy to work was Russian Internal revenue service (IRS). The service under the leadership of Mr. Michail Mishutkin became one of the most technologically advanced institutions in Russia. As a reward in 2020 Mr. M. Mishustin was promoted and appointed to be the Prime Minister with the task to move the changes forward.

Finally, the system got to civilian administration governance. On April 2019 a civilian copy of the NDMC, a new regional managing centre for Moscow region was established in Tula. At the opening ceremony the governor of Tula region acknowledged the center being as a MOD pilot project for civilians [3]. At the end of January 2020 Putin visited the centre and received a demonstration how a computerised management can help municipal authorities to solve problems reported by citizens (or at least to account them) almost instantly. The centre itself received Putin’s approval and simultaneously an encouragement for other regions to follow the same direction. Similar structures technologically advanced, digitalised, interconnected and using especially designed software are planned to be established in other federal regions as well.

2.3. Analysis: a Role of Cadres

Leaving aside structural changes one needs to bear in mind another important factor which influence recent changes in Russia very much. This factor is people which are supposed to subscribe to the Doctrine’s ideas and which consist Putin’s ruling elites. V. Putin comes from a military organization which in soviet times included not only ministry of defence but also other militarised organizations, secret and special services and so on. One of unifying factor for all of people belonging to the military organization is a strong sense of an institutional culture. In this case we talk about a military culture and even to be more precise about Prussian military culture. The last has been adopted in Russia since Tsar Paul I times (eighteen century) and is well known for emphasizing high professionalism and devotion and orientation to effectiveness and result. Russian analysts even came up with a special term for such a type of people or elite and named it as a “militocracy” - an elite which consists mostly of representatives from former military organization and others who appreciate and follow the military culture, values and etc.

Russian and foreign researchers have been and still are exploring this phenomenon. In Russia one of the most recognised experts in this field is Dr. Olga Kryshstanovskaya. In her research, mostly done in the early two thousand, she found that other, not belonging or corresponding to militocracy type, members of political elites and participants of political processes in the country under Putin’s rule were pushed aside. In a joint study with Stephen White she found that: “With the oligarchs Putin tried to reach a more amicable arrangement, the so-called “shashlik agreement””, “.... at which “something like a set of boundary lines” seemed to have been established”. “They were based on the principle of mutual non-interference: the Kremlin would not interfere in the affairs of the oligarchs, provided the oligarchs themselves did not interfere in politics “. While having such an agreement Putin’s militocracy started to grow in numbers and spread across other federal and regional governance institutions and even business. Olga Kryshstanovskaya also found and stated that this process started since Putin came to power. According her only during first two years of Putin rule a proportion of representatives from the military organization inside political elites grew up to 25,3 percent compare to 11,2 percent in president B. Jelcin elites. Other analysts (Nikolay Petrov, Marius Laurinavičius) in their numerous studies also proved and confirmed facts indicating militocracy percentage growing and former militaries and getting more and more involved into governance of the state and businesses as well [6, 7, 8].

The philosophy of the militocracy is not only about an integration of former militaries only. It is also about introducing an institutional (military) culture into elite preparation and functioning. Since last few years there are quite a few new projects designed to train businessaucrats and even politicians. One of those worth to mention is a project named as “Leaders of Russia”. Initiated in 2018 the project is designed to search for loyal and the same minded people to be involved in the governance. While allowing everybody from the entire country to register, the project, while it goes, eliminates those who fail different tests and training programs. Not surprisingly the great part of training

methodology is very similar to one used in the military. Especially this is true in leadership training part. The lucky winners get a possibility to have internships in the offices of recent ruling elite members and become candidates for a presidential cadre pool. Another project, initiated by Putin himself, is a subproject of “Leaders of Russia” and is called “Leaders of Russia. Politics” Initiated in a spring of 2020 the project is very similar to “Leaders of Russia”, but instead of preparation of administrators it is oriented to prepare new politicians to participate in a future Russian politics. After following a very similar to the previous project training, winners get internships inside different political parties. Later, they could join political activities or different parties, but this common mindedness remains and most probably would make political element of state governance able to cooperate smoother alongside newly trained businessocrats.

2.4. Analysis: a Role of Technologies

Technologies are playing an important role as the effort multiplier. Alongside the structural reorganization technologies at first and a new equipment based on them as second were introduced in to those changes as well. Russian military managed to boost development of technologies and to substitute missing high-tech components for new arms by nationally produced ones. Later this approach was taken for the entire state and now Russia is able to continue development of new equipment despite sanctions imposed on it. In the context of management, technologies became especially important in two fields: communications and computing. And the main solution and progress here was achieved through the digitalization.

In Russia, in a field of communications, Russian Armed Forces are in the lead today. They have reached a comparatively high level of digitalisation of equipment and interconnectivity among own participants. One needs to know that effective communication is also guaranteed by deliberate redundancy or duplication. An entire Russian military (and most probably the state) communication net consists of radio, radio relay and satellite communications. Add to this military internet, which is almost already finished, and you have a very reliable communication capability. This is valid at all levels starting from a tactical one and ending at the strategic, at the NDMC. Russians moved away from old analogue communicational equipment to new digital one. Digital fifth (multiple band) and sixth (Software Design Radios SDR) generation radios allow the information, data and commands fluctuate between different levels of commands at real time mode. Today, at the tactical level, sixth generation SDR “Azart” alongside other, the same generation “Stilet”, “Shans” and “Strelec” systems prevail. “Azart” became a framing system for tactical level Automated Command System (ACS) which has already been tested and is being delivered to the Armed Forces at a growing scale. Simultaneously still remaining at service fifth generation “Akveduk” and “Artek” radios are used as a temporary solution.

At operational and strategic levels with an introduction of new digital communication systems like “Redut”, “Antey”, “Liven” or “Baryer” the establishment of the unified and baked up communicational network was finalised also. Those systems help to run adequate ACS for the operational level.

But the most importantly digitalisation helps not only to increase a speed and volume of communication but also to make it more secure. Messages are coded and decoded using sophisticated algorithms faster. And an encryption of transferring the signal itself is also presented and used.

As it was already mentioned Russia continues not only designing and producing own new technologically advanced products. She also cooperates in a field of technologies with China especially borrowing internet (5G) ideas and trying to introduce them domestically. Next step for Russia would be further technological developments in a new areas like Quantum computing and etc. so the development of new equipment would be moved to even higher level.

Next to communication area technologies and digitalisation effected a computing also. Computing plays an important role in management and governance processes mostly in a fields of analysis, forecast and decision making. While talking about this we have to note that digitalisation made new processes very different compare to what they used to be in the past. Previously the majority of analysis was mostly performed and backed up by Automated Data systems (ADS). But, even being partially automated, analysis still was separated from forecasting or/and command and control (C2) who’s messages were usually distributes through other systems - Automated Command Systems (ACS). Computing, or simply to say an increased capability to “digest huge volumes of data and prepare not only forecasts but decision proposals allowed to merge ADSs and ACSs into one, unified ACS. As it was already mentioned adequate ACSs devoted to different levels are developed in the military today. Among those worth to mention ACSs like “Andromeda-D” or “ECY-3 Sozvezdya” which are designed for the tactical level and ACS “Akacya-M” adequately working in the operational one. There is also so called “Program Apparatus Complex - PAC” ACS which name is still not found in the open sources, but the system is mentioned as the system used at the strategic level (the NDMC). PAC is the system allowing strategic decision makers to respond to different situations and scenarios and simultaneously to train others how to do that All this variety of functions of the system allows participants of governing and management included in the C4IR loop to receive a real time data and information, to

do situation awareness, to develop potential decisions and to draft proposals for directives and orders. Finally, this system is able to perform command and control functions by manipulating and controlling weapon and equipment systems belonging not only to the MOD and Forces, but to other bodies (institutions) involved in the C4IR cycle as well. Huge computing capabilities developed by Russian and installed in the NDMC speed up the management and functioning of the entire military system and, depending on a matter of the problem, a great part of civilian (federal, regional etc.) systems as well.

Based on open sources information now the Russian General Staff is able to concentrate more on working out a set of draft proposals for potential decisions based on previous historical cases or theoretic calculations. While NDMC celebrating its five years anniversary Russian military TV “Zvezda” had shown a series of reportages. In one of those reportages, during an interview a duty general from the NDMC mentioned that today about 180 draft situational response plans and decision sets related to different, including civilian emergencies, like natural disasters or pandemic outbreaks, are already worked out and available. What the NDMC duty shifts need is the permission to activate and use them accordingly at any time.

Something similar is happening in other (not-military) areas as well. Russian federal communication agency Rostelekom (Russian. Ростелеком) is responsible and does digitalization of civilian communications net and increases technical capabilities alongside with a potential integration of those into the military communications. This is a beginning of creation of a huge, integrated communicational net which finally would allow to have only one military-civilian C4IR for the entire country.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one more aspect worth to be mentioned while discussing impact of technologies. AI helps to be more efficient, to respond faster, or sometimes even automatically. Technologies contribute to involving more application of Artificial Intelligence into governance processes. There are indications showing that the AI is being used in the military to make this NDMC’s PAC to work out potential solutions and formulate adequate orders in the future with less or even no human involvement. As one of CEO from a Russian company involved into the development and implementation of new technologies and AI stated in his interview to “Echo of Moscow” radio a “Smart City” type project is the project which allows to collect, combine, analyse a real time data and information coming from numerous sensors and to respond to any situations instantly according prescribed algorithms. Such a project began to be tested not only in Moscow city but also in the ministries of Emergency and Defence. A philosophy of Artificial intelligence application in Russia is partially following Chinese one. Already mentioned “Smart City” allows to follow not only processes but people as well. So far, even a face recognition is available and used already, there are no Chinese type social crediting things happening in Russia, and so far AI only helps to be faster in decision making and responding to certain type of challenges.

3. Conclusions

There are numerous changes happening in Russia today. Those changes enjoy a solid philosophical and theoretical background prepared by political right-wing academia, are accepted by Putin and recent elite and being done already for quite a time. And they are done with the purpose and are designed to make political vision of recent Russia rulers to come through.

Structural changes in Russia are done with the task to make state governance as much centralized as possible. The network based governing system supposed to be hierarchical. Russia is in the middle of modernization of the state governance. One part of the project (centralisation) has been already implemented in the MOD and is being implemented in other institution. A second part (network basing) is being tested now and supposed to be implemented in oncoming future.

Technologies have an impact on people and political environment. The executive leadership of Russia is changing. More and more people from the military and militarised organizations, possessing a certain institutional culture appreciating involvement of technologies into governing and young technocrats, familiar with technologies and eager to implement them into a life, are getting employed by political leadership to run the country. All they understand and see a value of centralised high technological governing of the state. The new Russian Prime Minister Mishutkin already announced that the technological progress will help the government to fulfil presidential projects.

New technologies and achievements, while implementing them, encouraged the MOD to develop new operational concepts where political factors become secondary and a primary role is devoted to managing systems (ADSs, ACSs), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and professionalism of operators. This becomes especially important in the recent world where situations might change so fast that it would be not enough time to have political discussions. In such a case certain response have to be already pre-planned, pre-discussed and preplaced. This increases the role of professionals who directly control the systems and those who develop algorithms for programs of the systems. This makes the daily governing more stable, effective and ... less politically motivated. Of course, political involvement retains its importance in special cases and in preparing political guidance for production of those “preplaced decision”.

Putin and recent ruling regime feel quite confident that with the power of new technologies and through the NDMC and other potentially supervising-able structures they could maintain an overarching control over the country. Recent Russian leadership feels that this new network based hierarchical governing system would be less influenced by redistribution of powers among political Olympus in case Putin and recent elites are removed and would sustain technocratic and AI backed up state governance done by loyal businessocrats.

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