

Russian government reshuffle: further mobilisation of resources for a protracted war

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On 21 October, the State Duma (the lower house of parliament) approved changes to the Russian government proposed by the prime minister but drawn up in the Kremlin. The reshuffle is the largest since May 2024 and primarily affects deputy prime ministerial posts, whose number increased from eight to nine. Irina Okladnikova, previously first deputy finance minister, replaced Dmitry Grigorenko, a close associate of Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, as deputy prime minister and head of the government apparatus. Oleg Kozhemyako, the governor of Primorsky Krai, became deputy prime minister and the president's plenipotentiary representative (Russian *полпред*) in the Russian Far East. He replaced Yury Trutnev, who had also chaired the commission for Arctic development. Finance Minister Anton Siluanov also became a deputy prime minister while retaining his ministerial portfolio. Another deputy prime ministerial post went to the transport minister Andrey Nikitin (the post had been vacant since deputy prime minister Vitaly Savelyev had been appointed deputy speaker of the State Duma). Nikitin will oversee the Transport Ministry, which will be headed by Dmitry Yadrov, the former head of the Federal Air Transport Agency, a role he took up in 2023.

The appointments weaken Prime Minister Mishustin's position while strengthening the Finance Ministry's influence within Russia's power structure. The ministry is responsible for securing the funds needed to sustain the war. The reshuffle may also be a step towards replacing the prime minister, although the timing of such a move and the identity of a possible successor remain uncertain. Defence Minister Andrey Belousov is the most frequently mentioned candidate.

Commentary

- **The most significant change is the marked weakening of Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin's position.** The replacement of Dmitry Grigorenko, the head of the government apparatus and a long-standing trusted associate of Mishustin, will further reduce the prime minister's influence over the government. The positions of the prime minister and the government had already been weakened by the 2020 constitutional reform. Grigorenko's dismissal may also signal that Mishustin himself is to be replaced. It remains unclear whether or when Vladimir Putin might take such a decision. However, Mishustin's dismissal would most likely signal a shift from a technocratic approach to governing the state and economy to a model focused on mobilisation, allowing Russia to sustain the war for at least several more years. Defence Minister Andrey Belousov, an

advocate of greater state ownership and more centralised control of the economy, is most frequently mentioned as a potential successor. Although the constitution gives the prime minister little say in the composition and policies of the government, which are determined by the Kremlin, he remains formally the second-highest-ranking official in the state and assumes the president's duties if the latter is unable to perform them.

- **The Finance Ministry, which is responsible for securing the funds needed to sustain the war, will gain influence within Russia's power structure.** Rapidly rising war expenditure is forcing the ministry to increase the tax burden on the economy while cutting spending on non-war priorities, particularly social policy, healthcare, agricultural support and infrastructure projects. These measures directly threaten the interests of Putin's elite, which has so far benefited from public procurement contracts and budgetary support, among other things. Against this backdrop, the decision to expand Siluanov's responsibilities once again (he previously served as deputy prime minister from 2018 to 2020) reflects Putin's confidence in him and strengthens his political standing. The appointment of Irina Okladnikova as head of the government apparatus will further consolidate the Finance Ministry's influence within the government. A close associate of Siluanov, she was previously responsible for budget planning and implementation. She served as deputy finance minister from 2020 until her promotion to first deputy finance minister in 2024.
- **The personnel changes underscore the strategic importance of the Russian Far East and the Arctic to the Kremlin.** Both regions play a key role in Russia's economic cooperation with China, its main partner. The replacement of Yury Trutnev, who had held his post since 2013, may reflect either his health problems or the Kremlin's dissatisfaction with his performance. Trutnev was an influential and relatively independent figure within Russia's power structure, owing his position directly to Putin. His successor, Oleg Kozhemyako, is regarded as an effective administrator, having served as governor of four regions in the Russian Far East, including Primorsky Krai, which he had led since 2018. He is also reported to have good relations with the Patrushev family, notably Nikolai Patrushev, Putin's aide for Arctic affairs who also oversees the shipbuilding sector, and his son Dmitry, the deputy prime minister responsible for agriculture and natural resources. Trutnev, meanwhile, may be appointed Putin's aide for patriotic education.