

What's up with Russia?

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Three weeks ago, many Russians and the world got a major shock as the Russian government dissolved and the prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev stepped down. Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, also proposed a series of changes to the Russia constitution, in what is being seen as an attempt to keep his power after his presidential term expires in 2024.

Putin announced these constitutional changes at his annual state of the nation address in Moscow. In particular, he proposed amendments that would transfer more power to the Russian parliament, also called the Duma. He stated this would be nationally voted upon. Other measures include limiting the supremacy of international law, amending the rules that limit a president to two consecutive terms, and strengthening laws

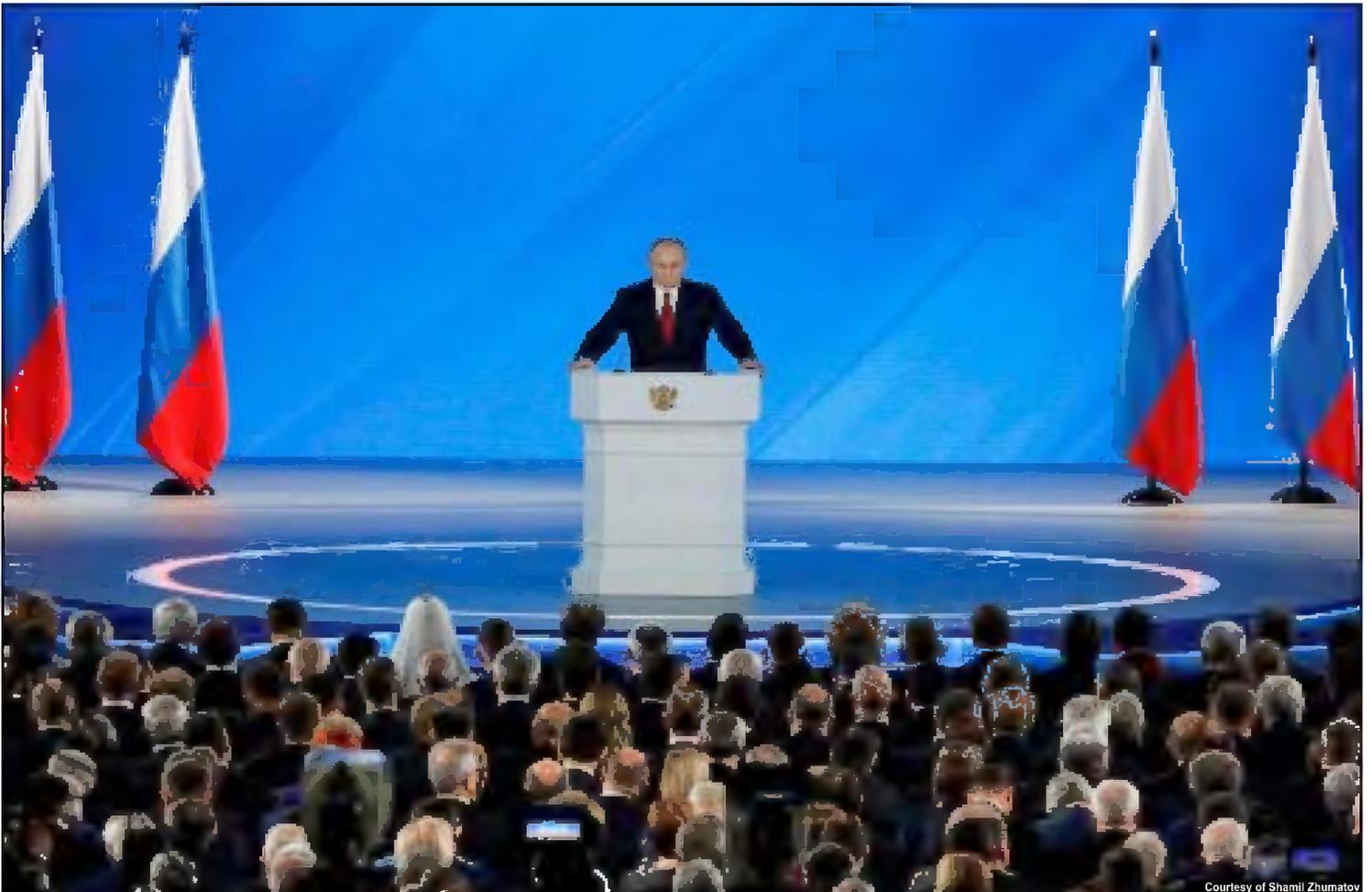
that prohibit presidential candidates who have held foreign citizenship or foreign residency permits.

Another key change would take the power of selecting a cabinet from the presidency and instead leave this up to the parliament. Currently, the prime minister and ministers are appointed by Putin himself. Under Putin's proposal, parliament would select the prime minister who would then nominate his own ministers for approval by members of parliament.

It was only a few hours after Putin's speech that Medvedev and the entire cabinet declared they would be stepping down, per Putin's request. Mr Medvedev made his announcement on state television with President Putin sitting next to him. "These changes, when they are adopted... will introduce substantial changes not only to an entire range of articles of the constitution, but also to the entire balance of power, the power of the executive, the power

of the legislature, the power of judiciary," Mr Medvedev said of Mr Putin's proposals. "In this context... the government in its current form has resigned." Medvedev will now become the deputy chairman of Russia's national security council. The president later nominated tax service chief Mikhail Mishustin to replace Medvedev as prime minister.

These changes were immediately scrutinized by observers as efforts done by Putin to keep himself in power, as he prepares for his presidential transition in 2024. At 67 years old, Putin has ruled over Russia for two decades. The question of how he will handle the end of his presidency when it arrives in four years time has increasingly been on the minds of people. Since the declaration of the government dissolving three weeks ago, there has been no update on the conditions of Russia's government, except that they will vote on Putin's proposals come September 2020.



Putin addresses the Federal Assembly in Moscow, Jan. 15 2020.

Courtesy of Shamil Zhumatov