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In today's [#vatniksoup](#), I'll introduce a Russian politician and military officer, Sergei Shoigu. He's best-known for serving as the Minister of Defence of Russia since 2012, for botching the invasion of Ukraine, and for being part of Putin's inner circle.

1/23



Shoigu was born in the impoverished Tuva Oblast, a remote area close to the Mongolian border. Later he studied at the Krasnoyarsk Polytechnic Institute, and later graduated with a degree in civil engineering. In the late 80s, he became active in the communist movement and...

2/23



... in 1990 he got a job as a deputy chairman through his father's connections. As Yeltsin came from a similar background, Sergei quickly gained his trust. He eventually became the head of the Russian Rescue Corps, an agency responsible for the rescue and disaster response...3/23



Sergey Shoigu was born in 1955 in the remote Tuva Autonomous Oblast (now the Tyva Republic), which borders Mongolia. He was educated as a civil engineer and worked as such not far from his home, in Siberia. For a brief time, he occupied low-level positions within the Communist Party, since Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika called for "party cadre renewal." The first sharp turn happened in 1990, when Mr. Shoigu went to Moscow and immediately became deputy president of the State Committee for Architecture and Construction.

That achievement is easy enough to explain. Since his father was one of Tyva's major party bosses, Sergey Shoigu knew many important people. From 1987 to 1989 Boris Yeltsin held a similar position in the construction committee. He was also a civil engineer by education and a party leader who rose up the ranks under perestroika. Though he had fallen from grace, he soon returned to the national stage, revitalized. Either through his father, local party bosses or the civil engineering milieu, Mr. Shoigu and the future President Yeltsin got to know each other. Their mutual trust blossomed.

..system. In case of a disaster,he would be the first to appear at the site,thus presenting himself as the hero.Russia-expert [@MarkGaleotti](#) has stated that Shoigu had a "big PR team" to help with this. This role made Shoigu very popular, and he stayed on the job for 21 years.4/23



Unlike everyone else in Putin's inner circle, Sergei wasn't educated in St. Petersburg or Moscow, and who doesn't have either KGB background or is an old buddy of Putin's from his St. Petersburg days.

Both Putin and Shoigu regard themselves as "muzhiks", or real Russian men.

5/23



Shoigu has allegedly convinced Putin of taking baths in blood extract from severed deer antlers in order to improve his cardiovascular system and to rejuvenate his skin.

Shoigu was appointed as the Minister of Defence in Nov 2012. He was considered as a weird choice...

6/23



Sergei Shoigu, the then head of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, was the first person in the Russian elite to become interested in antler baths. In the mid-2000s, Shoigu brought Putin to Altai for the first time, convincing him of the benefits of this treatment, which supposedly improves the cardiovascular system and rejuvenates the skin . On one of his trips, Putin, who was starting to think more about his health, immersed himself in a bathtub containing an odorant extract from blood-filled deer antlers. An acquaintance of the president claims that he had been warned that there is no conclusive evidence of the benefits of antler baths. But Putin liked it, and since then he has revisited Altai multiple times .

The sensitive elites quickly spotted Putin's new hobby. Antlers and other ways to extend one's youth quickly became popular among officials. One of the Project's interlocutors, a former presidential administration official, says that he himself has been to the antler baths in Altai and, among other people, met Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyenin there. Big fans of bloody procedures are the head of Gazprom Alexey Miller and his entourage — they fly containers with antler extract from Altai to Moscow on a business jet at least once a year . Another popular destination for the officials is a simpler one — the anti-aging procedures in the Karelian resort Kivach . Alcohol is banned there, but there are daily enemas, a Kremlin official recalled, claiming to have met many of his colleagues among those being enemized.

..for the role, as he's never served in the military. His predecessor, another civilian called Anatoly Serdyukov, had tried to reform and modernize the Russian army by reducing work force and implementing new taxation. Everyone in the army hated Serdyukov for his reforms,...

7/23

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Russia opens criminal case against former defence minister Anatoly Serdyukov

2 min read . Updated: 28 Nov 2013, 07:47 PM IST

Henry Meyer, Scott Rose



Russia's former defence minister Anatoly Serdyukov. Photo: AFP

Serdyukov, who steered Russia's biggest defence revamp since the Cold War, is accused of causing damages of \$1.7 million to the state budget

..and to gain the trust and to be credible in the eyes of the real generals, Shoigu gave military people cozy jobs as deputy ministers and wore an army general's outfit, regardless of never spending a day in the army. Shoigu also wanted to decorate his uniform with a bunch..

8/23

Russia's Armed Forces on Modernisation Course

Progress and Perspectives of Military Reform

Margarete Klein and Kristian Pester

In 2008 Russia's Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov launched a mammoth project of comprehensive military reforms, whose objectives his successor Sergei Shoigu has also upheld since his November 2012 appointment. Despite deficits in recruitment, equipment and funding, Moscow's armed forces have already accomplished the organisational transition from mass mobilisation army to modern combat force. Although the reforms will not fundamentally change the balance of power with the United States, increased military muscle-flexing vis-à-vis Europe must be expected. Above all, however, the reforms expand Moscow's ability to project power in the post-Soviet space and militarily reinforce Putin's efforts to tie that region more closely to Russia.

In October 2008, immediately after the Russia-Georgia War exposed serious deficits in the Russian armed forces, Moscow initiated the most sweeping military reforms for decades. The Russian leadership was seeking nothing less than massive modernisation of an army that was still to a large extent orientated on the concept of mass mobilisation. For conventional forces in particular this involves deep changes in organisation and concept as well as weaponry and personnel.

Until November 2012, Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Makarov vigorously implemented central elements of the reforms. This caused conflicts, including with the officer corps, which was reduced by one

third, and with the arms industry, towards which the reformers adopted a tougher stance. Serdyukov's dismissal on 6 November 2012 is therefore likely to have had deeper reasons than the officially cited corruption investigations against Oboron-servis, a commercial enterprise under the Defence Ministry.

As his successor, Vladimir Putin appointed the former Minister for Emergency Situations and governor of the Moscow region, Sergei Shoigu, a popular politician and capable manager. Now that Shoigu has been in office for a little more than a year, the question arises whether he has altered the reform agenda and if so how. Where can successes and failures be identified in the implementation of the original targets?

Dr. Margarete Klein is a Senior Associate, Major GS Kristian Pester an Associate in SWP's Eastern Europe and Eurasia Division

...of medals, but the problem again was that he didn't have any experience on the battlefield.

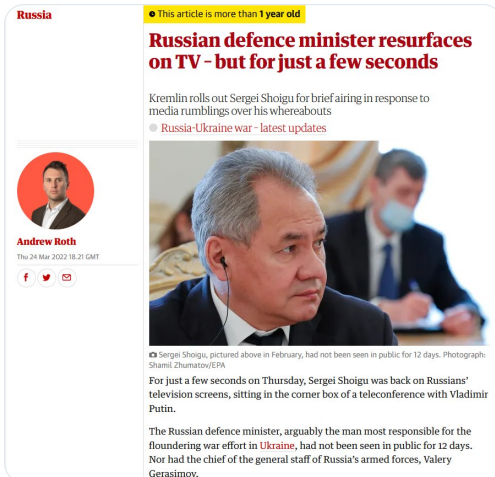
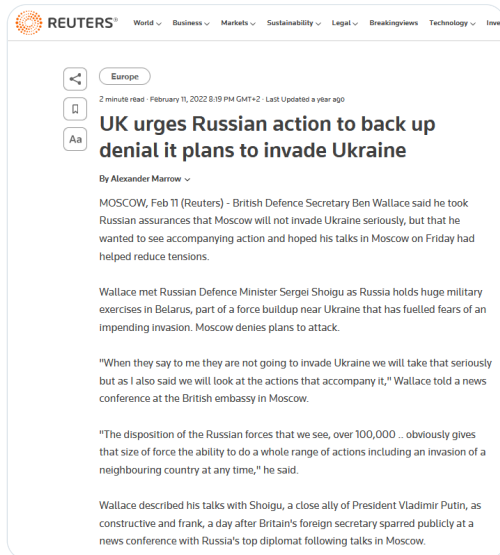
To solve this problem, he came up with hundreds of new medals and then awarded the most prestigious to himself.

9/23



Days before the invasion in Ukraine begun, Shoigu met with the UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, denying any upcoming attacks in Ukraine. At the beginning of the invasion, Shoigu disappeared for almost two weeks due to the complete failure of Russia's war effort.

10/23



Oleksandr Novikov, the head of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention of Ukraine (NACP), sent a letter to Shoigu in Mar 2022, for "ensuring the high level of corruption in the Russian Army". With the letter he accompanied pictures of egg trays used as tank...

11/23


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Ukraine's anti-corruption minister thanks Russian military for allegedly being so corrupt

Charles R. Davis Mar 11, 2022, 12:48 AM GMT+2



A fragment of a destroyed Russian tank is seen on the roadside on the outskirts of Kharkiv on February 26, 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Photo by SERGEY BOBOK/AFP via Getty Images

- The head of Ukraine's anti-corruption agency has thanked Russia for what it says is its corruption.
- In a letter, Oleksandr Novikov claims the corruption has thwarted the Kremlin's war plans.
- Russian forces have been ill-prepared, with reports they were given expired food to eat.

...protection, cardboard used in bulletproof vests, and the use of bright-colored civilian vehicles to transfer the Russian troops.

Last year Ukrainian, pro-Russian politician Kirill Stremousov suggested that Shoigu should "shoot himself" over Russia's military losses.

12/23



Stremousov died in a car accident on 9 Nov 2022, just a few hours before Shoigu ordered the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kherson. Igor Girkin agreed with Stremousov, stating that Shoigu should be "executed by firing squad".

13/23

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WORLD

Russian-Appointed Official Tells Putin's Military Chief to 'Shoot Himself'

BY ISABEL VAN BRUGEN ON 10/22 AT 7:47 AM EDT

Deadly To Russia: 'You Have Already Lost The War'

01:15

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Kirill Stremousov: Senior Russian Kherson official dies in car crash, officials say

9 November 2022

Russia-Ukraine war

GETTY IMAGES

Breaking with the official line, the ultra-nationalists have increasingly become a thorn in the side of Putin's administration, causing Putin's carefully assembled 'power vertical' to splinter from the inside.

Last week, Igor Girkin, a leading ultra-nationalist who led the pro-Russian separatists in 2014 trying to wrest the Donbass region from Kyiv's control in 2014, told his 581,000 subscribers on Telegram that Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu should be executed by firing squad and that Russia should launch strikes on Ukrainian power plants.

Several people, including Girkin, have called for tactical nuclear strikes to be used on various targets in order "to drive 20 million refugees to Europe." The tactic was encouraged again on Russia's state-run Channel One, the leading propaganda outlet, by Igor Korotchenko, a military expert and editor of Russia's National Defense magazine.

Wagner owner Yevgeny Prigozhin absolute loathes Shoigu. Since the beginning of the war, he's been criticizing Shoigu, called for his son-in-law to be drafted, and lately blamed Shoigu for not delivering enough ammunition to Wagner fighters around Bakhmut.

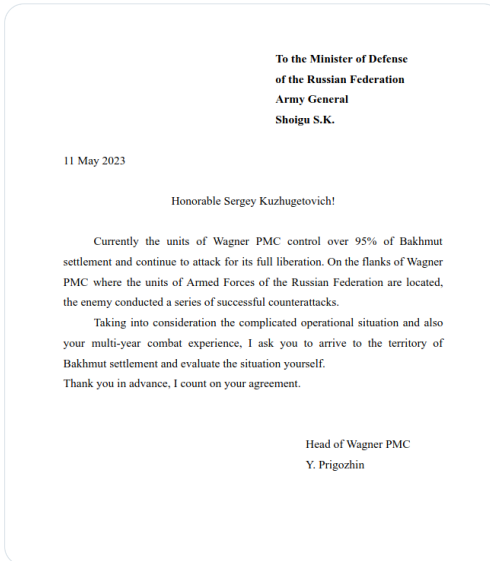
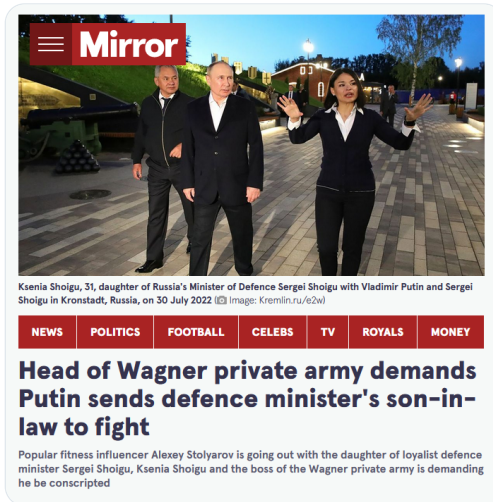
14/23



On 11 May 2023, Prigozhin wrote a derogatory letter to Shoigu, calling him to arrive to the front to evaluate the situation due to Shoigu's "multi-year combat experience".

Like Prigozhin, Shoigu has his own private military company called PMC Patriot.

15/23



It was deployed to fight in Ukraine in Dec 2022 around the town of Vuhledar. This front has been a disaster to the Russians, PMC Patriot & of course to Shoigu, as Ukrainian officials have claimed that the Russians have lost over 130 tanks & APC's in the course of the battle.

16/23



Shoigu's rhetoric regarding Ukraine has been predictable. He's claimed that Russia is at war with the "collective West", and that Russians and Ukrainians are "single people". He's tried to promote a false flag attack, claiming that the Ukrainians are preparing a "dirty bomb".

17/23

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Russia defense chief makes unfounded claims of Kyiv ready to use 'dirty bomb'

Sergei Shoigu spoke with French, British and Turkish counterparts by telephone on Sunday.

The calls come as Russia continues a mass evacuation of children from occupied Kherson in southern Ukraine | Carl Court/Getty Images

TASS

RUSSIAN NEWS AGENCY

MILITARY OPERATION IN UKRAINE 21 SEP 2022, 13:44

Russia is at war not only with Ukraine, but with collective West — Shoigu

Russian Defense Minister stressed that Ukraine had almost run out of its own weapons of Soviet manufacture

TASS

RUSSIAN NEWS AGENCY

29 AUG 2022, 17:26

Russia doesn't consider Ukraine as threat, says defense minister

Sergei Shoigu expressed the hope that the situation in Ukraine would ultimately change and the "nationalist mayhem" would be stopped

As is the tradition in the Putin's inner circle, Shoigu is living a lavish life in his 18 million USD mansion in Barvikha, registered in the name of his family members. Shoigu's declared annual family income during the purchase was 173 million rubles, or 2,66 million USD,...

18/23

RadioFreeEurope
RadioLiberty

October 27, 2015 20:32 GMT
By Carl Schreck

Russian Defense Chief Shoigu Accused Of Owning \$18 Million Mansion

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The alleged home of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu

so it's a mystery how he could afford the place (no it's not). The Insider has reported that Shoigu's mistress, stewardess Elena Shebunova, quickly became a millionaire after she started her affair with Sergei. She moved next door to the Rotenberg oligarch family, ...

19/23

THE INSIDER



Special-purpose stewardess. How Shoigu's mistress made billions on government contracts

Former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov resigned amid a corruption scandal involving his mistress Yevgenia Burdakov. Serdyukov denied any wrongdoing. The insider has learned that the current minister, Sergei Shoigu, is not much different from his predecessor. After getting into an affair with Shoigu, stewardess Elena Shebunova quickly became a millionaire and earned a mansion on Barvikha next door to the Rotenberg Palace on

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LRT study: Shoigu's extramarital daughter received Lithuanian citizenship

Indrė Makarevičiūtė, Jurgita Ceponytė, Mikhaïl Maglov, LRT Research Department
2022.10.16 16:39



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LRT Investigation: Shoigu's extramarital daughter received Lithuanian citizenship / LRT Research Department

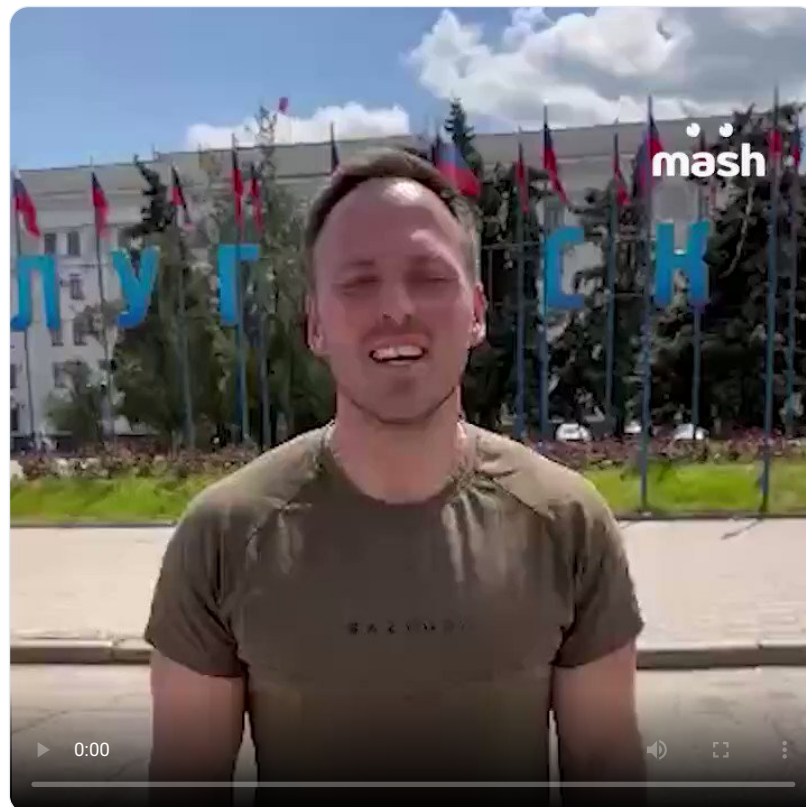
...in an estate worth 1,5 billion rubles. She also got sewing, food and construction projects worth over 100 million USD, ordered by the Defense Ministry. Elena was recently exiled from Lithuania after being considered a security threat.

20/23



Shoigu's youngest daughter, Ksenia, who also owns the beforementioned mansion, is married to a sports blogger Alexei Stolyarov. Recently, Stolyarov visited Luhansk for a PR trip to support Russia's failing "special operation" in Ukraine.

21/23



As is tradition, Ksenia and Alexei also traveled around the "decadent West" and various NATO countries, while Sergei was threatening the West with war.

Here they are pictured in Florence, Italy, in 2021.

22/23



Shoigu was sanctioned by the EU, the US, the UK and Canada immediately after the full-scale invasion in Feb 2022.

The Siberian Times have reported that Sergei is a polyglot and known to speak eight languages. It seems that he's most fluent in bullshit.

23/23



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Pekka Kallioniemi

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In today's #vatnik soup I will introduce 🇷🇺's most "hawkish hawk" and Putin's old friend, Nikolai Patrushev. He belongs to Putin's siloviki faction & he's considered to be one of his closest advisors. He's also seen

as one of the likeliest candidates for continuing Putin's work. 1/6



7:56 AM · Nov 20, 2022



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Yevgeny Prigozhin:



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In today's #vatnik soup I'll continue discussing Prigozhin, and focus on his mercenary group Wagner. It's a paramilitary organization that deals with Putin's "dirty problems". Private military contractors are forbidden by law in , and the group operates mostly beyond the law. 1/9



8:31 AM · Nov 11, 2022



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Wagner Group:



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In today's #vatnik soup I'll introduce Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner Group. I have written about the topic before, but now that it's been designated as a Transnational Criminal Organization by the US, we should reiterate some key points and update the latest news about them.

1/16



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Igor Girkin:



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In today's #vatnik soup I'll introduce a mercenary, military blogger and a mass murderer, Igor Girkin (AKA Strelkov). Girkin used to be a FSB officer and he's been involved in many Russian wars from Chechnya and Transnistria to 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War.

1/13





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