

VTB's Kostin Suggests Putin Limit Himself to Single Term

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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If Vladimir Putin wins the presidency in the March 4 election, he should announce that he won't seek a second term, VTB head Andrei Kostin suggested in an article published Monday in Kommersant.

Kostin argues that one of Putin's problems is that he has been in power too long. "For an open society in the 21st century, [12 years] is a huge amount of time. No leaders of democratic countries have been in power for so long," he wrote, noting that the middle class that is now demanding reform was created under Putin.

The article, which offers advice both to Putin and the opposition, endorses Putin's leadership that "restored the country after the chaos and economic instability of the '90s."

In Kostin's view, Putin's victory in the March 4 presidential election is certain. "You can argue whether this happens in two rounds or one, but there is no doubt about Putin's victory,"

Kostin said.

The head of VTB identifies two options for Putin to strengthen his political position over his first term. The first is to reorganize and renew his team, and the second is both to declare that he will not seek a second term and to institute a series of fundamental political and economic reforms.

Kostin underlines the need for reform, saying "life in exchange for oil" has no future. Concerning the opposition, Kostin comments on what he sees as a paradoxical call for honest elections, saying the only way the opposition can win is by rigging the elections themselves.

"The older generation of opposition leaders have shown for 15 years that they are unelectable, and the younger generation has no program or leaders," Kostin wrote. He calls for opposition members who call themselves the "creative class" to work to find a creative solution, not just shout slogans of "Putin leave."

"If anyone is interested in honest elections, this is first and foremost Vladimir Putin himself," Kostin writes. "Only this guarantees the legitimacy of his power."

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