

Former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin Sets Conditions for Return to Government

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Former Russian Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin

Former Russian Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, who left his position over personal disagreements with the Kremlin in 2011, said in an interview with the Interfax news agency Monday that if the authorities would undertake sweeping reforms, he would be willing to return to the government.

"I have never ruled out the possibility of returning to the government," Interfax quoted Kudrin as saying Monday. "I do not want to talk about [executive] positions, but this option is possible under certain favorable conditions: if the government becomes geared toward reform, as was the case in the early 2000s."

Kudrin, who runs the Civic Initiatives Committee, the stated objective of which is

to strengthen democratic institutions in Russia, added that the country's current political atmosphere failed to fulfill the conditions for his return to the government.

The former finance minister also told Interfax that he had turned down an offer to serve as chairman of Russia's Central Bank because he feared he would be forced to follow the government's political line and engage in policies that are economically ineffective.

Kudrin offered only a vague timeline for his potential return to government, saying the proper conditions would be put in place "as the need [for change] arises" or in "three or 10 years."

Kudrin was Russia's finance minister from 2000 to 2011, and served two stints as deputy prime minister. As an advocate of free market reforms, he has been credited with reducing Russia's foreign debt and helping the country cope with the 2008 global financial crisis.

Then-President Dmitry Medvedev asked that Kudrin to resign from his position in September 2011. Kudrin had angered the Kremlin by saying he would not serve under Medvedev if he became prime minister under current President Vladimir Putin in 2012 because of their differences about budgetary policy.

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