

Putin to Ally With Liberals, Report Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin's spokesman dismissed a news report published Tuesday that said Putin is preparing to forge an alliance with Yeltsin-era elites considered "liberals" in the country's current political system.

Dmitry Peskov said the conclusions made in the Nezavisimaya Gazeta article were "groundless" in comments carried by RIA-Novosti.

Citing a leaked report intended for governors' use, the report said that Putin, who has cultivated the image of a powerful mediator between Kremlin clans, would distance himself from the siloviki during his third term in office.

The appointment as defense minister of Sergei Shoigu, who served as emergency situations minister for more than a decade after his appointment under former President Boris Yeltsin, is evidence of Putin's change in loyalties, the report said.

"Putin is demonstrating his desire to strengthen the old elites, supporting not only the St.

Petersburg circle but also Yeltsin's liberal elites," Rostislav Turovsky, deputy head of the Center for Political Technologies, told Nezavisimaya Gazeta.

Yeltsin-era liberals have mostly left active politics since Putin assumed the presidency in 2000. Anatoly Chubais, head of the Rusnano technology corporation and once a powerful political heavyweight, is the only member of the clan who remains in the limelight.

The liberal-leaning newspaper, known for publishing leaks by Kremlin insiders, also said spin doctors would tweak Putin's image to that of a "political elder" instead of a sport-adoring macho, adding that Putin could display his new image as soon as Dec. 12, when he is scheduled to give his state-of-the-nation address.

Political experts said the report might be a part of a clan struggle within the Kremlin.

Gleb Pavlovsky, a political analyst and former Kremlin insider, has said that Putin had "temporarily" allied himself with the siloviki, referring to his dismissal in early November of Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, who was viewed as a rival to certain siloviki members.

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