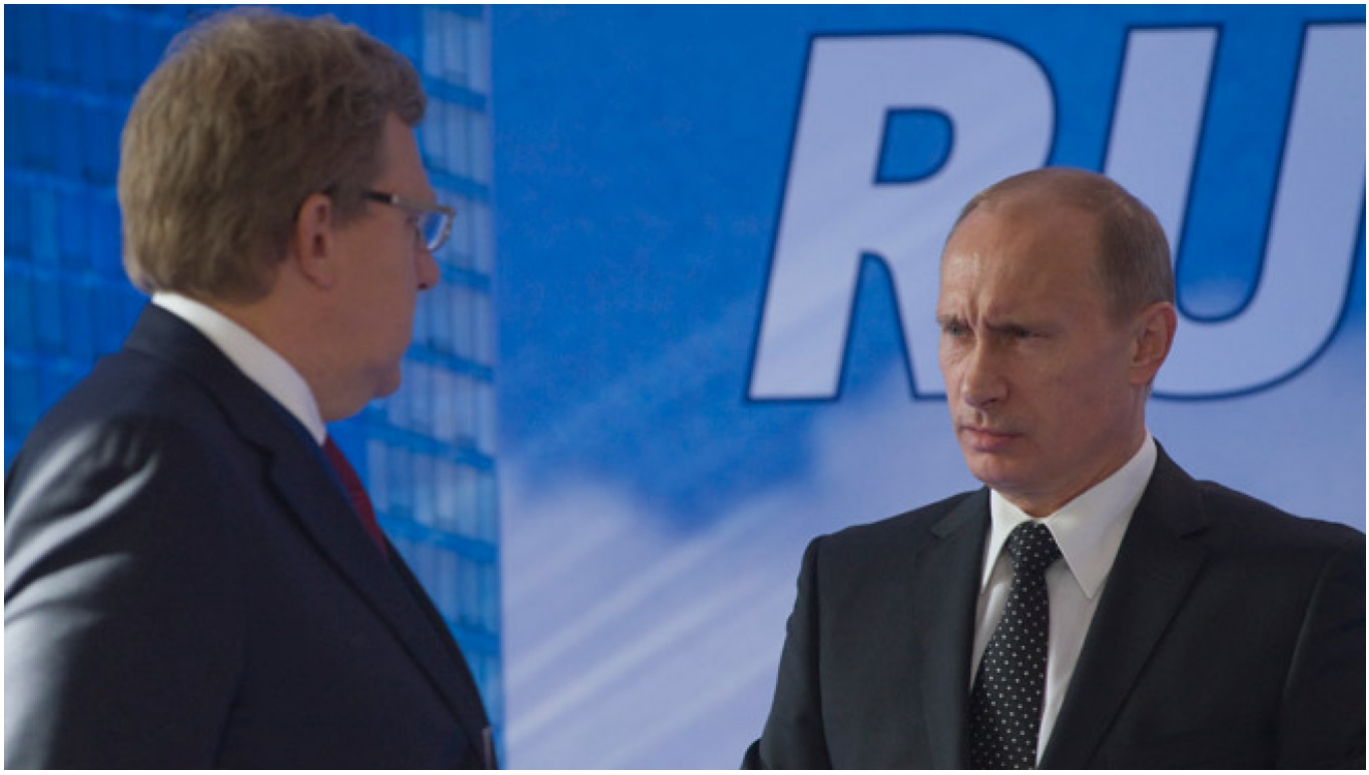
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Kudrin Urges Putin to Ease Geopolitical Tensions For Economy

By The Moscow Times

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Former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin has urged President Vladimir Putin to reduce geopolitical tensions for the sake of the Russian economy, the Vedomosti newspaper reported Monday.

Kudrin, the current chairman of Russia's Center for Strategic Research, told members of the president's Economic Council that Russia was "a technologically backward country."

Russia must integrate itself into international supply chains to narrow the technological gap and must reduce geopolitical tensions to achieve that, Kudrin said, Vedomosti reported.

Russia's economy has been reeling from falling oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's role in Ukraine conflict since 2014. The president's Economic Council was convened last week to discuss measures to boost Russian economy.

In the meeting's closing speech, President Putin said that while Russia lagged behind in

certain areas, the country had a thousand year history and that he would defend its sovereignty to the end of his life.

Kudrin's representative and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment, Vedomosti reported.

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