

Kremlin Eyeing Woman for 2018 Presidential Elections, Russian Paper Says

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Kirill Kukhmar / TASS

The Kremlin is considering pitting a female candidate against President Vladimir Putin in next year's elections, the *Vedomosti* newspaper [cited](#) presidential administration sources as saying Friday.

Five to seven candidates have reportedly been found suitable for the job, including three members of the State Duma's fourth-largest party, A Just Russia, several sources close to the Kremlin said.

Another source close to the presidential administration names journalist and socialite Ksenia Sobchak as an "ideal" entrant to run against Putin in the spring of 2018. The source explains that Sobchak exemplifies a "smart, young, interesting modern" Russian woman, but questions whether she will ultimately decide to run, *Vedomosti* reported.

Sobchak, however, was not enthusiastic. "I don't know who talks about what in the higher corridors of power, but I've been following the political landscape closely for a long time," she [wrote](#) on Instagram on Friday. "I have just one diagnosis: Your politics today, gentlemen, are a dismal pile of crap."

Irina Petyelyayeva, one of the A Just Russia members named as Putin's possible sparring partner, expressed more interest and told *Vedomosti* "there is a social demand for women in politics."

"This will increase interest in the predictable elections," she added.

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An all-male panel of political scientists cited by *Vedomosti* had mixed feelings on the subject of a female presidential candidate.

Political scientist Konstantin Kalachyov agreed that introducing women into the presidential race would help "diversify the playbook" and "build up drama" in an otherwise predictable campaign.

An ideal female presidential candidate would be someone independent and capable of improvising such as Duma Deputy Natalya Poklonskaya and Federation Council member Yelena Mizulina, *Vedomosti* cited him as saying.

Having a woman run for president was "a dangerous dream," Kalachyov added. "Women are Putin's main electorate," he said.

Political scientist Alexei Chesnakov told *Vedomosti* that an "elegant and sexy" politician would "add intrigue" to the election. "Strange, that in Russia — a feminine country — women don't have the ambition to take up the top posts."

A female presidential candidate would "steal everyone's votes," analyst Mikhail Vinogradov chimed in. He added that a "feminine woman" might, however, "somewhat mitigate voter fatigue and irritation" towards the same faces who participate in election after election.

Two women have run for president in Russia's recent past, with current Central Elections Commission head Ella Pamfilova collecting 1 percent of the vote in 2000 and former State Duma Deputy Irina Khakamada gaining nearly 4 percent in 2004.

In separate comments to *Vedomosti*, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov [said](#) the Kremlin "had not considered" a woman to participate in next year's elections.

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