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Duma Speaker: Putin, Not Oil, Is Russia's Greatest Advantage

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State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin urged lawmakers to unite for the common cause of strengthening Russia's future through Putin's rule. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's greatest advantage in forging a new future is none other than President Vladimir Putin himself, State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said Thursday.

Volodin's speech came in the wake of a proposed constitutional amendment that could allow Putin to remain in office until 2036 by resetting his presidential terms. The amendment, proposed on Tuesday by deputy Valentina Tereshkova, has been controversial.

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Addressing the State Duma on Thursday, Volodin urged lawmakers to act as patriots and unite for the common cause of strengthening Russia's future through Putin's rule.

"Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] is the core of the Russian Federation... He grabbed Russia

from the point of no return and assumed a responsibility that would remain with him for life," Volodin said.

Pointing to oil and gas — which make up the bulk of Russia's economy but have both dramatically fallen in price in the past week — Volodin defended Putin as Russia's greatest asset on the world stage.

"Today, given the challenges and threats that exist in the world, oil and gas are not our advantages," he said. "As you can see, both oil and gas can fall in price. Our advantage is Putin, and we must protect him."

Volodin also used his position to defend Tereshkova, who was the first woman in space, saying that criticizing her is tantamount to attacking Russia itself.

Later on Thursday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Putin agreed to support the amendment because of the "very, very turbulent" situation in the world today.

"In times like these, having a stable, secure, orderly government is very significant," Peskov told reporters.

Under Russia's Constitution, Putin will be required to step down from the presidency in 2024, at the end of his second consecutive and fourth overall term. Putin hasn't confirmed that he would run for the presidency again if the amendment resetting his presidential terms is adopted.

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