

Putin Vows to Make Russia 'Sovereign, Self-Sufficient Power'

By [AFP](#)

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Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday promised to make Russia a "sovereign, self-sufficient" power in the face of the West, in his first campaign speech before running again for president in a March election.

Putin, in power since 2000, will stand for president in March, in a vote with no real opposition that is expected to prolong his rule until at least 2030.

The vote will come just over two years since he launched Moscow's Ukraine offensive, prompting huge rounds of Western sanctions on Russia.

"We must remember and never forget and tell our children: Russia will be either a sovereign, self-sufficient state, or it will not be there at all," Putin said during a congress of the ruling United Russia party.

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Putin has said that he will make "sovereignty" — a loosely defined term — one of the key aims of his fifth term in the Kremlin.

"We will only make decisions ourselves without foreign tips from abroad," Putin told United Russia members, to applause.

"Russia cannot — like some countries — give away its sovereignty for some sausage and become someone's satellite," the 71-year-old said.

He accused the West of wanting to "sow internal troubles" in Russia.

"But such tactics did not work," he said.

The longtime Kremlin leader said "we still have a lot to do for the interests of Russia" and that the country faced "historic tasks."

All of Putin's political opponents are either in jail or in exile and Moscow has banned criticism of its Ukraine campaign.

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