

Constitutional Amendments in Russia

July 3, 2020

A **weeklong plebiscite** was conducted in Russia to approve constitutional amendments, which among various changes included **provision for extension of Presidential term**. However the plebiscite that concluded was tarnished by **widespread reports of pressure on voters and other irregularities**.

Constitutional Amendments

- The changes included a reorganisation of the government, introducing a higher minimum pension and wages, a ban on gay marriage, restricting top officials from holding dual citizenship, enshrining “faith in God” as a core value and emphasising the primacy of the Constitution over international treaties and rulings.
- The Russian Constitution **bars more than two consecutive presidential terms**. Putin is now into the second term of his second stint as President, which will expire in 2024.
- The new Constitution doesn't change the two-term limit in theory, but in practice, it **resets the clock** on Mr. Putin's terms so that in the first election under the new Constitution, to be held in 2024, Mr. Putin can start afresh.
- The proposed changes had already been approved by Parliament and the Supreme Court. But the Kremlin chose to **put it on vote for legitimacy and popular approval**.
- Putin has been in power for more than two decades longer than any other Kremlin leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.
- Many criticized the Kremlin for lumping more than 200 proposed amendments together in one package without giving voters a chance to differentiate among them.

Political System in Russia

State power is exercised by the following bodies: the President, the Federal Assembly (the **State Duma and the Federation Council**), the Government and the courts. State power in the regions of the Russian Federation is exercised by regional state authorities. **The President of the Russian Federation is the Head of State.**

Executive power is exercised by the Government of the Russian Federation. The Chairman (Prime Minister) is appointed by the President with the consent of the State Duma. The Government consists of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, deputy chairmen and federal ministers.

Observers describe the current state of the Russian political system as “**managed democracy**” or “sovereign democracy” or simply as “Putinism”. The three political parties not in government are called the “**systemic opposition**”. The dominant political clan in Russia is often referred to as the siloviki, **veterans of the security and military establishment** led by Putin himself.