
Russia Intends To Strengthen Its Power In The South Caucasus

By Gvantsa Gabekhadze
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President Vladimir Putin made a statement concerning the issue at the *Russian-Armenian Interregional Forum in Yerevan on December 2*.

According to Putin, Russia has never planned to leave the region.

"On the contrary, we are going to strengthen our position in the South Caucasus," Putin said.

He emphasized that the Russian position would strengthen, "relying on the best inheritance from our ancestors and good relations with all countries of the region, including Armenia."

Georgian Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze "does not want to believe that Russia might create a threat for Georgia."

She admitted that the Federation has already used all its levers against our country.

"However, despite the fact, we might face certain threats from Russia.

It is known to us from where the threat might emerge," Panjikidze stated.

She noted that Georgia has chosen its way of development and, presumably, Russia will not take actions aimed at disrupting the signing of the agreement with the European Union.

"Georgia and Russia are holding fruitful negotiations. We stand for changes in our relations and I think that Russia is unlikely to exacerbate them," she said.

Parliamentary majority member Davit Zurabishvili emphasized that Georgia should respond to Russian attempts with more steps forward to Europe.

Member of the United National Movement (UNM) Zurab Tchiaberashvili made clear that Russia's aims are obvious. According to him, Russia is trying to divide the world into various spheres of influence.

"Russia wants the states of the former Soviet Union to be under the Federation's supervision. The attempt is illegal as it restricts the freedom of states. The situation taking place in Ukraine is a vivid example of the Russian policy," Tchiaberashvili stated.

Military analyst Tengiz Pkhaladze thinks that Russia does not wish to lose its levers in the Caucasus region and will do its best to retain them.

"Putin's visit to Armenia and the statements made to them serve Russia's aim to preserve power in the region," Pkhaladze stressed.

Political analyst Vazha Beridze believes that the situation in Ukraine and the developments there will result in serious effect on Russian influence.

"If the West loses Ukraine, Russia might become the major leading force for the post-Soviet states very soon," Beridze states.
