

Lithuania Says Forget Russia Reset

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VILNIUS, Lithuania — Russia's decision on its leadership change next year has effectively buried any hopes of a renewal of relations with the West, Lithuania's prime minister said.

"No one should have illusions about how Russia will be ruled for decades to come," Andrius Kubilius told Lithuanian Radio.

Lithuania is among Russia's harshest critics in the European Union and NATO.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin announced that he had decided to reclaim the presidency next year, setting up the possibility that he could rule Russia until 2024. In nominating Putin, his United Russia party also approved his proposal that President Dmitry Medvedev take over Putin's current role as prime minister.

"All the restart policies or renewal of relations should now be locked in a deep drawer with a simple note attached: 'Here rest expired and naive dreams,'" Kubilius said Tuesday.

He said Putin's decision was not a surprise.

"But it probably surprised someone somewhere in Berlin, Brussels or Washington, where those illusions were alive as some expected Russia would turn into a modern state. Those illusions are over," Kubilius said.

Lithuania has most recently locked horns with Russia over natural gas prices.

It currently receives 100 percent of its gas from Russia and believes it is paying too much. It has been attempting to negotiate a lower price with Moscow, so far unsuccessfully.

Kubilius' conservative government irked Russia earlier this year by using a EU rule that allows member states to split companies that supply and transport natural gas — a direct blow to Russia's state-run Gazprom, which owns 37.1 percent of Lithuania's main gas company, Lietuvos Dujos. VILNIUS, Lithuania — Russia's decision on its leadership change next year has effectively buried any hopes of a renewal of relations with the West, Lithuania's prime minister said.

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