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Russia to Ramp Up Influence Efforts in Armenia Ahead of Parliamentary Elections – Vedomosti

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A rally in Yerevan. **Alexander Patrin / TASS**

The Kremlin is ramping up efforts to reassert its influence in Armenia ahead of the country's 2026 parliamentary elections, the Vedomosti business daily reported Wednesday, citing officials and other sources familiar with the strategy.

The initiative is being overseen by the Kremlin's domestic policy chief Sergei Kiriyenko and will focus on shaping public opinion and cultivating pro-Russian political figures.

"The Armenian leadership is drifting further toward the West, which is unacceptable from the standpoint of Russian state policy," Vedomosti quoted a source close to the presidential administration as saying.

Kiriyenko has been tasked with employing soft power to advance Moscow's interests in Yerevan, according to another source.

Information campaigns are reportedly already underway, with broader efforts expected as the elections approach.

While Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is seen as likely to win re-election next year, a source close to the presidential administration stressed that "this isn't just about elections — it's about Russia maintaining a presence."

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Apart from former presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan, there are few, if any, prominent pro-Russian politicians in Armenia.

"There's no one speaking for Russia there right now," Vedomosti quoted the source as saying.

Three departments within the presidential administration will coordinate the Armenian efforts: the Department for Domestic Policy, headed by Andrei Yarin; the Department for Monitoring and Analysis of Social Processes, led by Alexander Kharichev; and the Department for Public Projects, overseen by Sergei Novikov.

Relations between Moscow and Yerevan have been on edge since 2023, when Armenia appealed to the Russia-led CSTO alliance for support as Azerbaijan launched a lightning offensive to retake Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia, however, declined to intervene.

In February 2024, Pashinyan announced Armenia would freeze its participation in CSTO. The Armenian government has since adopted legislation to launch the European Union membership process.

Pashinyan's Civil Contract party currently holds a majority in the National Assembly.

Russia may aim for a limited, yet strategic role in Armenian politics, Mikhail Vinogradov, president of the Petersburg Politics Foundation, told Vedomosti.

"Public loyalty to Russia remains higher in Armenia than in other [post-Soviet] states," he said. "But the bitterness over Moscow's inaction during the last Karabakh war could still have lasting effects."

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