

## BBC Monitoring

Russian elite intends to use 'modernization' to embezzle funds - pundit Text of report by Gazprom-owned, editorially independent Russian news agency Ekho Moskvyy

Moscow, 11 February: Modernization in Russia is impossible without further democratization, political analyst Stanislav Belkovskiy, said on Ekho Moskvyy radio. He was commenting on reports that the European Commission has prepared and presented to Moscow its project entitled "Partnership for modernization".

"If we proceed from the classic definition of modernization, that is, building a modern society in a certain country, then, naturally, it presupposes Europeanisation of Russia, and Europeanisation certainly presupposes democratization," Belkovskiy said.

However, in the expert's view, the Russian "ruling elite does not intend to carry out any modernization, it intends to use the term exclusively for its own opportunistic purposes connected to business,"

"For the ruling elite of contemporary Russia modernization is a way to withdraw from the budget and budgetary funds a certain amount of billions of dollars for various projects of different degrees of adventurism and to embezzle these billions," Belkovskiy said. This sort of modernization can take place without democratization or anything else that characterizes the process of modernization in history",

Belkovskiy noted that "in this context there is no question at all whether democratization is needed or not". "In any case, it is definitely not needed for calm and quiet embezzlement of state billions, because in case of democratization the society can ask the ruling elite: where has the money gone, and where are the results of modernization?", he said.