

**MIDDLE EAST POLICY OF RUSSIA UNDER PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV:  
STRATEGIES, INSTITUTES, FACES**

*Başkan Medvedev Önderliğinde Rusya'nın Orta Doğu Politikası:  
Stratejiler, Kurumlar, Kişiler*

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**Abstract:**

This article is devoted to President Medvedev and the Russian Middle East Policy. The authors discuss strategic aspects of Russian policy in the area. They pay special attention to the Russian National Security Strategy of 2009 and Foreign Policy Concept of 2008. Analysis of main institutes of Russia contributing to Middle East policy formulation and implementation is made. The article considers the visits of President Medvedev on May 2010 to Syria and Turkey as events with far-reaching consequences and strategic perspectives. Russian policy under President Medvedev is evaluated in the frame of ambitious political aim, namely, a step-by-step Russia's return to the Middle East.

**Keywords:** *Dimitri Medvedev, Foreign Policy, Russia, Middle East, Syria, Turkey*

**Özet:**

Bu makale Rusya Devlet Başkanı Medvedev'in Orta Doğu politikasını ele almakta, 2009 Rus Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi ve 2008 Dış Politika Konsepti'ni göz önünde bulundurarak Rusya'nın bölgeye yönelik politikasının stratejik yönlerine ışık tutmaktadır. Makalede Rusya'nın Orta Doğu politikasının oluşturulmasına ve uygulanmasına katkıda bulunan başlıca kurumlar analiz edilmiştir. Başkan Medvedev'in Mayıs 2010'daki Suriye ve Türkiye ziyaretlerinin geniş kapsamlı sonuçlar verdiğini ve stratejik perspektifler sağladığını ileri süren bu çalışma Medvedev dönemindeki politikaları Rusya'nın Orta Doğu'ya adım adım geri dönüş hedefi çerçevesinde değerlendirmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Dimitri Medvedev, Dış Politika, Rusya, Orta Doğu, Suriye, Türkiye*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Two and a half years have passed since President Dmitri Medvedev came to power in Russia. We saw many interesting foreign policy events in the Middle East so that it is possible today to discuss some peculiarities of Russian policy in relation to the area. It is evident that Russian policies in the Middle East have traditional and innovative aspects in strategy, institutes and diplomatic initiatives.

### **1. STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF RUSSIAN POLICY**

The Russian strategy in the Middle East is defined by two main documents. The first one is called National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020. The Strategy was approved by a Decree of President Medvedev on 12 May 2009. The document is very interesting because it shows how President and his team think to meet challenges of contemporary globalization and how the Russian political leadership perceives countries and key problems of the region. The national security strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 is an officially acknowledged system of strategic priorities, goals and measures with regards to domestic and foreign policy, which determines the degree of national security and the level of stable, long-term development of the state.

Authors of the Strategy note that the transition in the international system from opposing blocs to principles of multivector diplomacy, together with Russia's resource potential and pragmatic policy for its use, have broadened the possibilities for the Russian Federation to reinforce its influence on the world stage. In the long term, the attention of international politics will be focused on ownership of energy resources, including in the Near East, the Barents Sea shelf and other parts of the Arctic, in the Caspian basin, and in Central Asia.

In the medium term, the developments in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as conflicts in the Near and Middle East, in a number of South Asian and African countries, and in the Korean peninsula, will continue to exert a negative influence on the international situation.

We also read in the document of Strategy that in the long term, the Russian Federation will seek to construct international relations based on the principles of international law, and on the institution of reliable and equal security of nation-states. For the defense of its national interests, Russia, while remaining within the boundaries of international law, will implement a rational and pragmatic foreign policy, one which excludes expensive confrontation, including a new arms race.

As Russia has common border with Middle East countries (Turkey and Iran), the issue of borders remains serious and sensitive. The Strategy stresses that one of the conditions of national security is the reliable defense and protection of the state borders of the Russian Federation. Then, inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts also pose a threat to security of Russia.

“The main threats to the border-related interests and security of the Russian Federation are the presence and possible escalation of armed conflicts near its state borders, and the Security threats to borders include the activity of international terrorist and extremist organizations which base their emissaries and terrorist means in Russia and organize sabotage on Russian territory, and likewise the increased activity of transnational criminal groupings engaged in the illegal transfer across the Russian border of narcotic and psychotropic substances, goods and cargo, water and biological resources, other material and cultural valuables, and in the organization of channels for illegal migration. A negative effect on the reliable defense and protection of Russia's state borders is exerted by the insufficient level of development of border infrastructure and of technological equipment for border-related bodies”.

In attempt to solve border security problem, Russian leaders rely on modern technologies. As the Strategy says,

“The resolution of border security problems is achieved by creating high-technology and multifunctional border complexes, particularly on the borders with the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and likewise by increasing the

effectiveness of state border defense, especially in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, the Far East and on the Caspian.”<sup>1</sup>

The second important document is The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation which was approved by the Russian President on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2008.

According to the Concept of 2008, Russia pursues an open, predictable and pragmatic foreign policy determined by its national interests. Russia develops international cooperation on the basis of equality, mutual respect for interests and mutual benefit. Balanced and multivector character of Russian foreign policy is its distinguishing feature. This is due to a geopolitical position of Russia as the largest Eurasian power, its status as one of the leading States of the world and a permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council. Our national interests today make it imperative to actively promote positive agenda covering the whole spectrum of international problems.

Regional priorities of the Russian foreign policy, especially in the Middle East need to be mentioned. Russia intends to develop further its relations with Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya, Pakistan and other leading regional states in bilateral and multilateral formats. The Concept asserts that Russia will make a substantial contribution to the stabilization of the situation in the Middle East by using its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of the Quartet of international mediators. The main goal is to channel collective efforts into achieving, on an internationally acceptable basis, a comprehensive and long-term settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State living in security and peace, side by side, with Israel. Such a settlement should be reached with the participation of all states and nations that are key actors in bringing stability to the region and taking into consideration their legitimate interests. The Russian Federation is in favor of increasing collective efforts, on the basis of mutual respect, to contribute to the end of violence and to reach political settlement

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<sup>1</sup> National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, Approved By Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 12 May 2009, No.537, President of Russia, [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru)

in Iraq through national reconciliation and full restoration of country's statehood and economy.

In other words, Russian policy in the Middle East must be active, innovatory and pragmatic. Moscow strives to use collective potential of all concerned states and parties in the process of Arab-Israeli peace advancement.

The Concept gives special impetus to Russia-Islamic world relations. This foreign policy vector has become more influential due to efforts of Turkey, Spain, Germany, Russia and some other countries to develop very serious and constructive dialogue among civilizations. To enhance its interaction with the states of the Islamic world, Russia takes advantage of its participation as an observer in the work of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, and plays an active role in implementing the G8 Partnership with the Broader Middle East and North Africa region. Priority attention is paid to developing mutually beneficial economic cooperation particularly in the energy sector with the countries of this region, which is of strategic importance to Russian national interests.<sup>2</sup>

These foreign policy targets form the conceptual space and strategic atmosphere on which Russian Middle Eastern policy develops upon. As we can see, Moscow relies on predominantly political and diplomatic instruments as well as on intensive cooperation with Middle East partners.

## **2. MAIN INSTITUTES OF RUSSIAN MIDDLE EAST POLICY**

Strategy is always implemented by special foreign policy institutes and people with skills. Russia has a big foreign policy machine. It consists of the Presidential Executive Office and various ministries and offices of the Russian Government (Cabinet of Ministers). In addition, we must name parliamentary institutes like Council of Federation and State Duma, upper and lower houses of the Russian Federal Assembly. The foreign policy machine is also influenced by non-

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<sup>2</sup> The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation July 12, 2008, President of Russia, [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru)

governmental organizations and interest groups. The article is devoted mainly to President Medvedev's Middle East policy and, accordingly, we pay special attention to the power and skills of President and his Administration in the Middle Eastern affairs. We also must take phenomenon of two politicians in power into account. The reality of Russian politics is such that President Medvedev is responsible for foreign policy sphere while Prime Minister Putin is responsible for social, economic and interior policy issues.

“The President of the Russian Federation shall define the basic guidelines of the state's foreign policy” as the Constitution of the Russian Federation declares. The President is invested with extensive rights to implement the state's foreign policy. Dmitri Medvedev is the head of state who largely determines Russian position in international affairs. The President represents the Federation of Russia in international relations, conducts negotiations and signs ratification documents. In practice, the President's constitutional authority in the realm of foreign policy is exercised in the form of various ongoing activities. First and foremost, this involves negotiations with the heads of other countries during their visits to Russia and the President's visits abroad. An accepted practice has become "comparing notes" on various international policy issues with foreign partners over the telephone. Another active means of international communication is the exchange of messages. All these activities are the result of painstaking work, through which Russian foreign policy positions are drawn up.

The President appoints and recalls diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation to Middle Eastern states and international organizations, including the Organization of Islamic Conference. These appointments are preceded by consultations with the respective committees or commissions of the Federal Assembly's Chambers. The President signs international treaties that are an integral part of Russian legal system. According to existing practice, the President formulates the basic foreign policy guidelines in his annual addresses to the Federal Assembly and in other public appearances.

As we can see, President Medvedev has at his disposal more power on foreign policy. To advance his Middle East policy, the President needs highly professional Presidential Executive Office. The Office is responsible for providing the President

with administrative support and enabling him to carry out his duties as head of state. This includes drawing up bills for the President to submit to the State Duma for consideration. The Presidential Executive Office also prepares drafts of decrees, orders, instructions, Presidential speeches and other documents, including the President's Annual Address to the Federal Assembly. The Presidential Executive Office monitors and checks the enforcement of federal laws and Presidential decrees, orders and instructions, and reports the results to the President. The Office also co-ordinates the President's work with political parties, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, unions, foreign governments and their representatives, Russian and foreign politicians and public figures and international organizations. The Presidential Executive Office analyzes all information on socioeconomic, political and legal trends both domestically and internationally. The President oversees the general functioning of his Executive Office, but its day-to-day activities are managed by the Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office.<sup>3</sup>

Politics is made by people. In this context, it is important to see who assists President Medvedev to formulate and execute Russian policy in the Middle East. They must be officials with serious experience in foreign policy realm. Among many Executive Office officials we must name, first of all, Alexei Gromov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office. He is 50 and graduated from Moscow State University in 1982. Specialist on Southern and Western Slavs history, Gromov worked for 14 years (1982-1996) in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is not a specialist on Middle East, however, he knows diplomatic and consular work quite well: Gromov served as a Soviet diplomat in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and as a Consul of the Russian Federation in Bratislava, Slovakia. Deputy Chief of Staff, he speaks fluent Czech, Slovak and English. Gromov started to work in the President Administration in 1996, under President Boris Yeltsin. As Deputy Chief of the Presidential Executive Office Staff, Gromov has served since May 2008 after Dmitri Medvedev had come to power.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> About Presidential Executive Office, President of Russia,  
<http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/administration/about>.

<sup>4</sup> Major Staff of Presidential Executive Office, Gromov Alexei,  
<http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/persons/4/>.

The second person who is directly oriented at the foreign policy in the Executive Office is Sergei Prikhodko. Prikhodko is an aide to President Medvedev on foreign policy issues. He was born on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1957, in Moscow and graduated from Moscow State Institute of International Relations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR in 1980. Like Gromov, Prikhodko is a well-experienced specialist on Eastern Europe, on Czechoslovakia in particular. He served in Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in embassies up to 1997 when Presidential Executive Office invited him to be an aide to President Yeltsin. Prikhodko served Deputy Head of the Presidential Executive Office, then Head of the Presidential Foreign Policy Directorate in 1999-2004. When President Putin was re-elected as Russian President, Prikhodko was appointed aide to the President.<sup>5</sup>

The person who was appointed as the Chief of the Presidential Foreign Policy Directorate is Alexander Manzhosin. As far as we know, Manzhosin is probably the only expert on the Middle East in the first echelon of the Executive Office. Son of Soviet Counsel in Istanbul, Manzhosin became himself a specialist on Turkey and served as diplomat in Turkey and in Cyprus. He speaks English and Turkish.<sup>6</sup> The Presidential Foreign Policy Directorate which Manzhosin is head of, assists the President in setting the country's main foreign policy outlines. It helps to draw up general foreign policy strategy and supports the President in exercising his powers to direct the country's foreign policy. It provides information, analytical and organizational support for the foreign policy and international relations activities of the President and Presidential Executive Office and is responsible for the content of foreign policy events in which the President takes part. It organizes the cooperation between the President and the Chief of the Presidential Executive Office and the state bodies and officials of foreign countries, foreign political and public figures, and international and foreign organizations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Major Staff of Presidential Executive Office, Prikhodko Sergei, <http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/persons/20>.

<sup>6</sup> Александр Леонидович Манжосин, Биографическая справка, 20.05.2008, <http://www.rian.ru/spravka/20080520/107898982.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Subdivisions of Presidential Executive Office, Presidential Foreign Policy Directorate, <http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/administration/division> .



Then, we need to mention the Presidential Experts' Directorate in order to analyze the competence of the executive Office. It provides expert and analytical support to the President in the exercise of his constitutional powers. It prepares expert evaluations, analytical reports and other expert and analytical materials required by the President and the Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office. It is responsible for expert and analysis work on financing the activities of the President and the Presidential Executive Office. Chief of the Presidential Experts' Directorate is Ilya Lomakin-Rumyantsev who worked in financial companies and is considered to be a very bright expert and a man of systematic analysis. In addition, Presidential Directorate for Interregional Relations and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries, headed by Sergei Vinokurov continues to assist President Medvedev.<sup>8</sup> To our mind, it is this Directorate which could raise its status and influence on the Middle East policy in near future.

The Security Council of Russia remains to be a very powerful body and instrument of President Medvedev's policies. The need for constant analysis and strategic planning regarding all security issues, as well as the drafting of presidential decisions, necessitates the existence of a special constitutional advisory body accountable to the President. This body is the Security Council.

The Security Council which was formed in 1992, drafts policy proposals on defending the vital interests of individuals, society and the state against internal or external threats. The Council also helps to determine a uniform state policy on security and helps to ensure the President's ability to carry out his constitutional duties in defending human and civil rights, as well as Russia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The Security Council is formed by the President in accordance with the Constitution and the Federal Law "On Security". The President chairs the Council and appoints its members. The secretary of the Security Council who answers directly to the President, oversees the Council's work and its Office.

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<sup>8</sup> Presidential Directorate for Inter-Regional Relations and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries, *Ibid.*

The Security Council Office is a separate department of the Presidential Executive Office; its status within the Presidential Executive Office is like a directorate. And this fact displays that the Council is an effective instrument of President Medvedev both in the sphere of strategy formulation and in the sphere of policy execution. In order to carry out its functions, the Security Council forms inter-agency commissions, which operate as its principal working bodies. Depending on the task, these commissions can be formed on a functional or regional basis, and can be permanent or temporary. In order to provide scholarly expertise for the Council's work, there is a Scholarly Council made up of representatives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, specialized academies of science and educational institutions, as well as other academics and experts.<sup>9</sup> As the Council's website messages show, its officials maintain good relations with the Security Councils of Middle East states like Libya, Syria, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and others.<sup>10</sup>

Presidential Commissions also play a remarkable role in Middle East policy of Russian Federation. Among the commissions, specific Commission for Military Technology Cooperation with Foreign States should be named. It is an advisory and consultative body that prepares suggestions to the President on key aspects of state policy with regard to military technology cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign states.<sup>11</sup>

The Presidential Executive Office represents the most powerful and influential foreign policy decision-making machine. However, Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs still is an integral part of the country's foreign policy institutions. A constructive role of the MFA in the Middle East policy can easily be explained. Many orientalist ("vostokovedy") serve in Moscow and Russian diplomatic missions abroad. They speak Middle East languages, they know about the culture and religion very well, they are able to work with geography and they understand the mentality of the people living in the area. Skills of those people are supported

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<sup>9</sup> About Security Council/ President of Russia, [http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/security\\_council/about\\_sec](http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/security_council/about_sec).

<sup>10</sup> Sovet Bezopason'sty Rossiyskoy Federatsii, Novosty, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/>.

<sup>11</sup> Presidential Commissions, Commission for Military Technology Cooperation with Foreign States, <http://eng.state.kremlin.ru/commission/1/news>.

by rich experience of diplomatic service in capitals of Turkey, Iran, Arab countries and Israel. People of the MFA make up probably the best part of Middle East studies community in Russia.

In terms of institutes, MFA is a ministry of the Russian Government. It has Middle East and North Africa Department which is responsible for diplomatic relations with countries of the area. In addition, Consular Service Department deals with consular ties with the region. Alexander Saltanov is a famous person in the MFA presence in the area. He is the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Special Representative of the President for the Middle East and has diplomatic rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. Saltanov, as Deputy Minister, oversees Department for Middle East and Northern Africa Affairs. In that capacity, he is responsible for relations with the countries of the Middle East and Africa, and the Middle East and Iraq settlement.

Diplomatic career and biography of the Russian diplomat is outstanding. Saltanov was born in 1946 in Moscow and graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. He has been working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1970 and has served in a variety of positions both in the central office of the Ministry and abroad. In particular, Saltanov served in Kuwait, Syria and Jordan. In 1999-2001, he served as Director of the Middle East and North Africa Department of the MFA. We should add various working tours and visits of Saltanov on Arab-Israeli peace process. His working languages are Arab, English and French.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Saltanov cannot be compared with the academician Evgenyi Primakov who is considered to be informal adviser of President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin on Middle East issues. Nevertheless, Deputy Minister appears to be a key person after Minister Lavrov who contributes to Russia Middle East policy formulation.

Referring to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, we should also mention about Ambassador Venjamin Popov who was an organizer of establishing Russia-

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander Saltanov, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, [http://www.mid.ru/bul\\_ns\\_en.nsf/kartaflat/en03.02.06](http://www.mid.ru/bul_ns_en.nsf/kartaflat/en03.02.06).

Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) dialogue. Following personal diplomacy of President Putin, Ambassador Popov did his best in order to get political recognition of Russia as a friend of the Islamic world. It was Ambassador Popov who was appointed as the first representative of Russia to the OIC. President Medvedev understands all benefits of cooperation with Islamic world and has already expressed his understanding in meeting with OIC Secretary-General Professor İhsanoğlu.

### **3. VERY IMPORTANT VISITS**

In concluding remarks, we must remind of two visits of President Medvedev to the Middle East. These visits were made to Turkey and Syria and in our opinion these two visits shaped the major perspectives of the Middle East policy of Russia.

The first event took place in Turkey on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Russia and Turkey have established the High-Level Cooperation Council. The declaration on the council's creation was signed by Dmitri Medvedev and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. President Medvedev held talks with the Prime Minister of Turkey in Ankara and the two leaders also chaired the High-Level Cooperation Council's first meeting. The council will act as the guiding body in setting the strategy and main directions for developing Russian-Turkish relations. The council will meet annually and will coordinate the implementation of important political, trade and economic projects, also cultural and humanitarian cooperation. A strategic planning group headed by the two countries' foreign ministers is being established within the council to discuss the main issues on the agenda for Russia and Turkey's cooperation in international affairs. The group will meet at least once a year. An agreement has also been reached on establishing a Russian-Turkish public forum. Also, Medvedev and Erdogan signed intergovernmental agreements on reciprocal visa requirements, cooperation on construction and operation of a nuclear power plant at the Akkuyu site, and organization of a mixed international rail and ferry link between the ports of Kavkaz (Russia) and Samsun (Turkey).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Russia and Turkey have established the High-Level Cooperation Council, May 12, 2010, Ankara, President of Russia, <http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/media/events>.

No doubt, it was a real diplomatic and political breakthrough in bilateral ties. Two sides also initiated a number of memorandums: on cooperation in higher education; compliance with phyto-sanitary measures in reciprocal supply of plant-derived products; grain quality and safety; conditions for supply of poultry and other raw meat products; and agriculture. Russian multi-vector policy met Turkey's Strategic Derinlik ("Strategic Depth") approach initiated by Foreign Minister Professor Davutoglu successfully.

The second event took place on the eve of the visit to Turkey. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, Russian-Syrian summit talks were held in Damascus. During the talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Dmitri Medvedev expressed confidence that the current friendly relations between Russia and Syria will continue in the future. The talks continued with the participation of the two countries' delegations. The two sides discussed prospects for the development of economic and humanitarian ties and also touched on issues of the international agenda, in particular, the issue of Middle East peace settlement. Following the talks, Russian President Medvedev and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued a joint statement. A number of Russian-Syrian documents on cooperation in areas including information technologies, air traffic, tourism, environmental protection, and scientific-technical cooperation were signed.<sup>14</sup> Russia-Syria talks had also deep political meaning. Moscow has conducted policy of returning. Policy of coming back to the Middle East was initiated by President Putin. Today, it is continued by President Medvedev. We suppose the coming back will not stop and will not be influenced by the UN Security Council Resolutions in relation to Iranian nuclear program.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Russian-Syrian summit talks May 11, 2010, 14:00 Damascus, President of Russia, <http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/media/events>.

<sup>15</sup> Dmitri Medvedev signed Executive Order On Measures to Implement UN Security Council Resolution 1929 on Iran, adopted on June 9, 2010. The executive order prohibits, in particular, transit via Russian territory (including air transport), export from Russian territory to Iran, and also transfer to Iran beyond Russian territory using ships and aircraft under the Russian state flag of any battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems, as defined for the purposes of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, S-300 air defence systems, or any related equipment to the above-named items, including spare parts/ Executive Order On Measures to Implement UN Security Council Resolution 1929 on Iran. September 22, 2010, President of Russia, <http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/acts/980>.

## CONCLUSION

Common vision of international community to solve conflicts of the Middle East is needed. President Medvedev as lawyer by profession and by beliefs sincerely thinks that it is possible to maintain open and honest substantive discussion of the regional problems. President of Russia considers that unilateral action leads to destabilization of international relations, provokes tension and arms race, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, and endangers security of Middle East states and peoples.<sup>16</sup>

Dmitri Medvedev continues to advance basic directions of Middle East policy inherited from President Putin. The main idea of the policy is to return Russia to the area. However, Russia has not come to the region with Soviet style of diplomacy. Refusing of ideology as an instrument, President Medvedev relies on the rules of international law, strong bilateral cooperation and multilateral approach to resolution of the conflicts. Peculiarities of Medvedev diplomacy are joint economic projects, military technological assistance to selected countries and export of Russian education and culture. *Roszarubezhsostrudnichestvo* (Directorate of Scientific and Cultural Cooperation with Foreign States) as affiliated to the Russian MFA institute strives to make humanitarian and other cultural initiatives helpful, effective and durable.

One more and specific instrument of Middle East policy is the protection of Russian citizens in the area. Citizens of Russia and former Soviet Union and their children reside both in the Palestinian Autonomy, Israel, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Algiers. Protection of their human rights and their security is considered as a foreign policy priority. We saw how President Medvedev made decision to evacuate Russian citizens due to the Israeli military intervention in the Gaza Strip in January 2009. Will this humanitarian instrument help Russia to settle conflicts in the Middle East? It is a question of future.

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<sup>16</sup> See also: Article by Dmitri Medvedev in Syrian Newspaper Al-Watan, May 9, 2010, President of Russia, [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru).

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