

Russia in the Middle East: An Unlikely Comeback

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During the Cold War not many diplomatic decisions could have been made either in or regarding the Middle East without taking Soviet interests into account. In the post-Cold War period, however, Russia-Middle East relations have gone through many reversals.¹ In 1992-95, Russia's role in the region was purely nominal and generally compliant with the US standpoint. This changed in 1996 with the appointment of Yevgeni Primakov, a trained Arabist, as foreign minister. Russia supported Arab states verbally but did so carefully, always bearing in mind its relations with the US and Israel.

Since Vladimir Putin's rise to power in 2000, Russia's relations with the Arab world have been marked by self-interested pragmatism, without any predetermined pro-Arab sentiments, but free of the inferiority complex towards the West that developed in the aftermath of the Cold War. Russia's upgraded political clout in the Middle East was prodded by its strengthened energy sector and the lack of viable success of the US-led military and political initiatives in the region. However, the practical implications of a stronger Russian presence should not be overestimated. Western experts believe that Moscow is unable to replace Washington as the primary ally of regional actors aligned with the US. "[The] security [of those states] would not be enhanced by trading their alliances with Washington for ones with Moscow. Nor do any anti-American regimes in the Middle East have any illusions that Moscow will protect them either."² In Russia, the situation is interpreted differently, though the practical result is the same. According to Primakov, Russia is not interested in becoming an

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alternative player in the Middle East, but rather an equal partner in the conflict resolution club. Russian policy in the Middle East unfolds in accordance with Moscow's global agenda and is implemented via multi- and bilateral ad hoc coalitions. Russia acts visibly in the UN Security Council and keeps open the channels of communication with regional actors not always seen as legitimate in the West.

This article first briefly outlines major directions of Russian foreign policy. It continues with illustrations of Russian foreign policy implementation in the Middle East and concludes with steps that might be taken by Israel to accommodate Russia's diplomatic initiatives.

Russian Foreign Policy Objectives

In recent years Russian foreign policy has stressed the value of legally binding agreements, elevated over the political declarations and personal rapport that characterized the Gorbachev-Yeltsin era. Acting abroad, Moscow pursues three principal objectives: multipolarity; regional security; and promotion of economic interests in its "natural sphere of influence" and worldwide (mainly cooperation in the energy, military, and technology sectors). A review of its foreign policy doctrine reveals that Russia aims to:

1. Become an influential world center
2. Create favorable external conditions for the modernization of its economy
3. Influence global processes through the UN (using its veto right in the Security Council)
4. Search for common interests with other actors to advance Russia's national priorities and ensure its international position
5. Promote good neighborly relations, and assist in eliminating the existing hotbeds of conflict (which is apparently a lip service goal, in light of its actions in Georgia in 2008, the handling of the crisis over gas transit through the Ukraine to Europe in the winter of 2009, and the "milk war" with Belarus in June 2009)
6. Provide comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad
7. Propagate its culture and cultivate a positive image of the country.³

Multipolarity

Multipolarity (goals 1, 3, 4) is to be promoted by offsetting the unilateralism of the US (for example, through non-cooperation with the NATO/US decision to deploy interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic), cooperating with other centers of power, giving more weight to the UN, and avoiding cooperation in situations when Russia is “led”⁴ by the US/NATO. Russia does not accept America’s explanation of a direct link between Tehran’s nuclear ambitions and the US missile defense plans for Poland and the Czech Republic. President Medvedev’s remark that “the wish to ensure absolute security in a unilateral way is a dangerous illusion”⁵ exemplifies this non-cooperation. Russia does not object to a United States-Russia-Europe joint missile defense system. However, it was made clear in the past and during the US-Russian summit in Moscow in July 2009 that it views it as “joint missile defense architecture” which should result from “joint decision making.”⁶

Moscow aims at reestablishing its cooperation with the West from a position that will take into account its improved international prestige. In this vein, renegotiation of the START-1 accord, despite the declaration of intentions signed during the Moscow summit, may not conclude quickly, as the Kremlin⁷ will link these talks to American plans to deploy an anti-missile shield in Europe. Therefore, “the talks will be used to boost Russia’s prestige as an equal partner with the US.”

To secure multipolarity Russia also advances relations with non-Western political actors (e.g., the BRIC cooperation with the non G-8 states;⁸ the strategic India-China-Russia triangle; the Sino-Russian strategic partnership,⁹ the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO); the Eastern Siberian pipeline.). It also maintains dialogues with sometimes ostracized parties, including Iran, North Korea, Hizbollah, and Hamas. These relationships strengthen Russia’s international image as a potential mediator, though the latter objective is becoming harder to achieve in light of Obama’s diplomatic overtures to the Arab world.

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Regional Security

Russia's "Monroe doctrine"¹⁰ interweaves with the objective of securing economic interests in the neighboring states. Creating a security circle of loyal "satellite" regimes around its borders is vital for Moscow to prevent disintegration from within, especially in the northern Caucasus. Simultaneously, it preserves the powerhouse role in the former Soviet republics, especially in the energy sphere, where it strives for control over regional transport routes to Europe. Gas supplies via Russian-controlled pipelines (to northern and southern Europe) are used for political leverage in transit countries (e.g., Ukraine) and in Europe.

Moscow is intensifying cooperation with secular Muslim regimes (e.g., Tajikistan and Azerbaijan¹¹) without intervening in their domestic affairs; Central Asian states respond in kind by turning a blind eye to Russia's controversial policies on Islam. The Georgian crisis did not harm Moscow's stance in the West. Moreover, it strengthened Russia's reputation among the former Soviet republics, as it brought the power factor to the forefront of political interactions in the region¹² and showed Moscow's readiness to deploy force if its position is ignored. Hence, pro-Western Central Asian regimes (as in Azerbaijan) are discouraged to emphasize their pro-Western orientation,¹³ though the US administration has repeated that "Azerbaijan will find a strong friend and partner in the US."¹⁴

Economic Interests

Against the background of the economic recession Moscow tried to bail out governments in Russia's "traditional sphere of interest" (\$2 billion loans to Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, a \$3 billion grant to Kazakhstan, and plans to establish a \$10 billion regional bailout fund for post-Soviet states). This program was intended as a good bargain in exchange for preferential access for Russian businesses and weakening regional ties with NATO. However, the loan promised to Belarus was not provided, which led to political tensions that intensified with the "milk war" between Minsk and Moscow in June 2009. As a result of the tension Belarus did not attend the Collective Security Treaty Organization meeting held in Moscow on June 16, 2009.

Russia imitates the EU's strategy of trying to spearhead political integration by establishing an economic and custom union with former

Soviet republics (e.g., Belarus, Kazakhstan) as an alternative to the EU. But in contrast to the “first Europe,” the “second Europe”¹⁵ (Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Georgia) is much less willing to integrate with its natural hegemon.

Overall, then, Russia aims at multipolarity, advanced by means of ad hoc coalitions;¹⁶ strengthened regional security; and stronger influence in its historical sphere of interests that covers the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern Europe, and the Central Asian region.

Russian Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Moscow’s policies in the Middle East derive from its three general objectives. Multipolarity, regional security, and economic interests often interface in policies towards particular regional political actors, when no single underlying foreign policy motive can be identified (e.g., vis-à-vis Iran). In general, the Middle East serves as an arena for balancing US political clout to secure Russia’s international standing. However, this does not mean that Moscow wants Washington to cede its position as the regional leader. The decline of its influence may not be in Russia’s medium term interests.¹⁷ At present Russia benefits from its role as facilitator without being held responsible for the outcomes. Russia also lacks the logistical means¹⁸ to assume the leading position in the region. For example, it excludes a peacekeeping role as costly and potentially harmful for its image in the Arab world and chooses to capitalize on its broadly advertised, though hardly visible on the ground, humanitarian assistance.¹⁹

With regard to the regional security objective, a presence in the Middle East fosters conditions for stability inside Russia with its growing Muslim population. According to a 2002 census, Russia is home to 14.5 million Muslim citizens and 5 million Muslims from former Soviet Union republics. Muslims comprise about 10 percent of the population, and by 2050 are expected to grow to 25 percent. A Middle East presence also helps the fragile normalization in the Caucasus. Overall, therefore, Russia is interested in a politically stable Middle East. Military or social tensions provoked by the presence of foreign militaries, civil wars, acts of terrorism, or political destabilization are apt to cause a chain reaction in Russia, as it lacks “defense perimeter installations which used to defend former Soviet borders.”²⁰

Russia advances its economic interests via cooperation with Arab states, and this effort was boosted following a setback caused by the military and political dominance of the US. In March 2003 Zarubezhneft CEO Tokarev argued that “the Americans do not need anyone else in Iraq; they will control Iraqi crude themselves.”²¹ However, during his Moscow visit in April 2009 Iraqi prime minister al-Maliki said that the Iraqi authorities were prepared to guarantee investment protection for Russian firms and resume its pre-war contracts with Russian oil companies. There are also speculations that the sides were moving towards the restoration of military ties.²² Russia acts to enhance trade volume with Arab countries, which constitutes an important market for its military industry. At the same time, it is careful about providing state of the art weaponry that can affect the fragile security equilibrium in the region.

Three leading regional issues illustrated briefly below exemplify implementation of Russia’s major foreign policy objectives in the Middle East.

Israel, the Palestinian Issue, and Syria

Pundits,²³ echoed by governmental officials,²⁴ suggest that Moscow has recently adapted a holistic approach towards the Middle East. Friendship shown towards Islamic people combines with good Russian-Israeli bilateral relations. The latter exemplify Moscow’s strategies to advance multipolarity and, via UN-backed diplomatic action, reduce the US hegemonic influence on Israeli-Palestinian-Syrian relations. Military cooperation with Syria receives a low profile in Moscow. In May 2009 Russia halted a contract for supply of MiG-31E – an export model of the MiG-31, named “Foxhound-A” in NATO classification. Some suggest this resulted from pressure by Israel; others believe that Damascus did not have money to pay for the project and the pragmatically oriented Russian government did not want to add to the debts Syria already owes it. On the other hand, Russia’s political establishment is eager to play a more important role in mediating and co-sponsoring the Arab-Israeli conflict resolution process. This is viewed as a low cost tool for boosting Russia’s international standing and advancing multipolarity.

In the years of the Putin administration, Moscow’s position regarding the Middle East peace process vacillated, depending on the

political currents. In general, though, it did not “seek to synchronize the progress of the settlement in all directions.”²⁵ This tone has since changed. Alexander Saltanov repeated Lavrov’s words that the region needs “the full-scale negotiations in three directions: Israeli-Lebanese, Israeli-Syrian, and Israeli-Palestinian.”²⁶ Lavrov²⁷ urged Israel to engage in dialogue with its neighbors within the framework of the Arab peace initiative. Recently Russia acquired a strong supporter when Obama encouraged the Arab League to revise the text of the initiative to make it more appealing to Israel.²⁸

Signals transmitted from Moscow suggest that at the next meeting of the Quartet it will act to advance negotiations based on previous agreements. That implies “the creation of an independent Palestinian state within generally recognized borders, the ending of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Golan Heights, the normalization of Arab-Israeli relations—in other words, the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region.”²⁹ The question of feasibility of this goal bothers Russian officials less. A senior diplomat noted, “We are interested in promoting peace talks between the parties and the Arab initiative is a legitimate framework for advancing the process...On the other hand, we understand the security concerns of Israel and will leave the resolution of the most controversial issues to Israel and the Palestinians.”³⁰ Moscow is eager to harvest the diplomatic yield from the peace process without giving an account for the quality of the crops.

Between March and June 2009 Lavrov referred to the Arab peace initiative on several occasions. It was labeled as the only basis for negotiations, as it “adds a very important element to the land for peace formula....The Quartet will vigorously seek to ensure the talks with the Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese proceed exactly in this vein. We are convinced that this must be a pivotal concept at the Moscow Conference.”³¹

To strengthen its status as a communications channel, the Russian political establishment capitalizes on its rich Chechen experience in turning non-state militant actors (the Kadyrov, the Salimov brothers) into loyal forces. Moscow maintains a dialogue

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with the non-state regional actors delegitimized in the West, when Hizbollah and Hamas are positioned as legitimate interlocutors³² and not terrorist organizations.

Iran

Russia's stance on the Iranian problem is an issue where all three major foreign policy objectives are intertwined. Moscow views the situation as complex but not critical.³³ It is less concerned about Iran's missiles and more about Tehran's calculated efforts to earn the status of a regional power. "No matter what happens, Iran, not the United States, will remain an important neighbor to Russia."³⁴ For that reason, Moscow wants to seize the opportunity to tighten relations with Tehran. Commercial and geopolitical dividends from these relations will improve Russia's regional security and advance its economic interests. Russia cooperates with Iran (e.g., 29 SA-15 Gauntlets, worth \$1.5 billion, were delivered to Iran in 2006³⁵) and works with Iran to develop technology and communications, infrastructures, energy, oil, and gas sectors.

In contrast to Russia's perception of Saudi Arabia's behavior during the second Chechen war, Iran is viewed as acting responsibly in Central Asia and Central Caucasus. It does not attempt to openly challenge Russia's influence over the former Soviet republics in this region. In addition, disagreements concerning the Caspian coastline became less prominent because Russia sided with Iran in their joint dispute over a proposed oil pipeline between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Moscow would prefer Iran's nuclear program to remain civilian, though an Iran with nuclear weapons "would hardly pose a greater security risk than Pakistan, and the Russian leadership may be prepared to accept such a prospect."³⁶

In terms of regional security objectives, Iran is viewed in Russia as a key regional player. Moscow states that the ongoing security issues, in particular Afghanistan, cannot be addressed without close cooperation with Iran. Speaking in Washington, Lavrov declared that "to have a direct dialogue with Iran is the only way to proceed in this region.... Yes, Iran has influence in the region. Iran has influence, and Iran has always had influence in Afghanistan, now has influence in Gaza. In Lebanon it has good standing.... Don't rely on force alone... respect the traditions."³⁷

On the other hand, in July Moscow permitted the US to fly war materiel through Russian airspace to Afghanistan in exchange for a halt of the program to place a missile interceptor base in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic.

The Moderates: Egypt and Saudi Arabia

Russia interacts with moderate Arab states mainly to promote its economic interests, though multipolarity is also advanced as a byproduct of Moscow's bilateral relations with Cairo and Riyadh. Moscow cultivates economic relations with Cairo, which offers little support to the Islamic revival in Russia, does not compete with it in the energy market,³⁸ has stable diplomatic relationships with Israel and the US, and has strong economic ties with Russia (1.8 million tourists annually; trade volume in 2008, excluding tourism, was estimated at \$2 billion).

Until 2008 the lack of domestic stability inside Russia stirred up tension with the Gulf states. Tension was also aroused with Moscow's conviction that Riyadh tolerated Muslim charity groups funding separatist rebels in Chechnya.³⁹ However, regional security considerations were removed from the agenda after a series of visits by Saudi dignitaries and officials to Russia that followed Putin's visit to Riyadh in 2007. This intensive exchange of delegations has warmed relations between the two states. In 2008 Bandar Bin Sultan Bin Abdel Aziz al-Saud signed an agreement with Moscow to enhance their military and technological cooperation. All the above indirectly enhances Moscow's salience in the Middle East strategic calculus and advances its pursuit of multipolarity.

Assessments

Israel should understand Russia's interests in order to devise strategies that would address Moscow's diplomatic initiatives without damaging relations between the two countries. Israel would do well to adapt its moves to Russia's diplomatic aspirations and produce messages that Russia is prepared to internalize.

First, for the time being, nothing need be said or done to irritate both Russia and the US. Each for its own reason is interested in dealing with the Iranian problem by non-military means. Russia is less

fearful of a nuclear Iran than the US. On the other hand, Moscow's response to Israel may be less severe and will likely not last long should Israel unilaterally decide to attack the Iranian nuclear facilities. On a declarative level Russia opposes the attack but in practice it may gain from it economically and politically. Unilateral action against Iran would increase Iranian vulnerability and make it a more agreeable energy supplier and a consumer of Russian industrial technology.

Second, the message that Israel accepts Russia as one of the key players in the conflict resolution process, aired by Foreign Minister Lieberman during his Moscow visit, should be reinforced. Israel may want to urge Moscow to assume a leading role in the Quartet if Russia accepts Palestinian demilitarization as a condition for negotiations. That would satisfy the Kremlin's aspirations for multipolarity, will not make much impression in the White House, since clearly no party is capable of usurping the US' primary role in the region in the foreseeable future, and will delegitimize the present version of the Arab initiative.

Third, Israel should capitalize on the common concerns regarding the radicalization of Islam. This message should be conveyed to the Russian Security Council, the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, and the relevant political figures (e.g., Saltanov) who may have some influence on shaping foreign policy.

Fourth, the economic attractiveness of the Israeli-Russian business partnership should be revived and underscored. In Israel this aspect of bilateral relationships with Russia is often neglected while for the Russian side it is one of the leading considerations in articulating its foreign policy goals.

A significant increase of Russian influence in the region is not to be expected. Russia will remain a secondary, pragmatic, and emotionally uninvolved actor. Its attitude towards Israel as a low cost tool to advance Russia's multipolarity goals will not alter unless Israel turns into an attractive economic partner. However, its position with regard to the Arab League peace initiative may become tougher,⁴⁰ since it now coincides more with the US position than in the past. In addition, the current US administration is more willing to make room for Moscow's political and economic interests in the region.

Notes

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- 1 From 2000 until 2003, there was a rapprochement with the West under the banners of “European choice” and alignment with the US. For the next four years, Moscow adapted the politics of non-alignment, emphasizing its independence and simultaneous aversion to conflict. In 2007, in the overview published on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, “newly acquired independence in formulating and advancing its foreign policy goals” (Vladimir Putin, 2008, official address from www.mid.ru) was named as the most significant achievement of Russian Foreign Policy. During the 44th Munich Conference on Security Policy, Putin “invited” the West to consider Russian interests but said this “compulsion to partnership” was unproductive. In 2008-9 Russia moved in the direction of isolation from Western “partners.” In 2008 the country’s leadership felt confident domestically, but in 2009 the consequences of the global financial crisis became too cumbersome, and the rapprochement was relaunched though a new “reset” stage is to be accompanied by “legally binding” agreements. The shifts were conditioned by changes in the economic situation and the related growing confidence of Moscow’s political leadership. However, the goal of multipolarity remained a constant component of Russian foreign policy, while strategies and secondary ongoing goals have evolved according to the political and economic situations.
- 2 Mark N. Katz, “Comparing Putin’s and Brezhnev’s Policies toward the Middle East,” in *Society* 45, no. 2 (2008): 177-80.
- 3 Foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation (excerpts from the full text), <http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/osndd?openView&Start=1&Count=30&Expand=2.1>.
- 4 From “Geographic Directions of Russian Foreign Policy Development,” <http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/osndd?OpenView&Start=1&Count=30&Expand=2.2#2.2> N 431-27-03-2007.
- 5 Dmitry Medvedev, “Building Russia-US Bonds,” *Washington Post*, March 31, 2009.
- 6 Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, March 20, 2009, <http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0903/doc10.htm>. Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the Russian lower house’s international committee said in July 2009 that “strong signals are coming” from both President Obama and his inner circle indicating that “the Americans have, as a minimum, halted and as a maximum are reviewing” their missile defense program. Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/news/2009/space-090708-riano-vosti01.htm>. On the other hand, Sergei Karaganov stated that “discounting the military transit agreement, everything Presidents Medvedev and Obama agreed on, are but declarations of intention.” Source: Sergei Kara-

- ganov, "Good Judgment, Negotiations in Moscow Stopped the Deterioration Trend," *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, July 8, 2009.
- 7 Alexander Goltz, "Why Obama Angers Kremlin," *Yezhednevnyi Zhurnal*, January 23, 2009.
 - 8 The BRIC nations now occupy over 25 per cent of the planet's land surface and make up over 40 per cent of its population. According to Vyacheslav Nikonov, president of the Polity Foundation, by the middle of the century they might account for more than 50 per cent of the world's economy, *Interfax*, June 2, 2009.
 - 9 Sergei Lavrov, in an interview to the Chinese newspaper *Keczi Dzhibao*, April 3, 2009.
 - 10 A foreign policy approach presented by President James Monroe, which suggests that the US must retain distinct spheres of influence from Europe and the rest of the Old World.
 - 11 Medvedev's meeting with two new ambassadors to Baku and Dushanbe, March 17, 2009, <http://www.novopol.ru/text63882.html>.
 - 12 Pavel Baev, "Virtual Geopolitics in Central Asia: US-Russian Cooperation vs. Conflict of Interest," *Security Index* 14, no. 1 (2008): 29-36.
 - 13 Oleg Vladykin, "The Point of No Return is Close," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 4, 2008.
 - 14 "US to Cooperate with Azerbaijan on Energy, Says Obama," *Asbarez.com*, June 2, 2009, <http://www.asbarez.com/2009/06/02/us-to-cooperate-with-azerbaijan-on-energy-says-obama/>.
 - 15 Sergei V. Lavrov, "Russian Foreign Policy and the New Quality of the Geopolitical Situation," http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/itogi/BC2150E-49DAD6A04C325752E0036E93F/.
 - 16 These ad hoc relations serve Russia's immediate interests but do not influence or have implications for the formulation of Russian foreign policy in other areas.
 - 17 Katz, "Comparing Putin's and Brezhnev's Policies toward the Middle East."
 - 18 Eric Margolis, "Russia: Big Threat or Paper Bear," March 24, 2009, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/margolis/margolis142.html>.
 - 19 During the Lebanon war Russia sent four IL-76TD jets with humanitarian cargo and teams of medics. After Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, the Russian ambassador to Israel emphasized the importance of his country's humanitarian involvement, which was already mentioned in Medvedev's address. The idea was to send two jets with humanitarian cargo to Gaza and donate to the PA fifty armored troop carriers and two civil helicopters, though there is no official information on whether these plans were actually implemented.
 - 20 Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe?* (Prager, 2007), p. 10.
 - 21 *Kommersant Daily*, April 11, 2009.
 - 22 Ibid.

- 23 Ekaterina Stepanova, *Russia's Middle East Policy: Old Divisions or New?* PONARS Policy Memo No. 429, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Moscow, December 2006, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/pm_0429.pdf.
- 24 Foreign Minister Lavrov's press conference, March 2, 2009; address by Russian ambassador to Israel Peter Stegny at Tel Aviv University, March 11, 2009.
- 25 Vladimir Putin, official address on November 11, 2008; see also Lavrov press conference, November 8, 2008, [http://www.ln.mid.ru/bl.nsf/8d1d0629a4b238e7c3256def0051fa29/dc3e9d2cafc0a813c32574fe004e1f26/\\$FILE/11.11.2008.doc](http://www.ln.mid.ru/bl.nsf/8d1d0629a4b238e7c3256def0051fa29/dc3e9d2cafc0a813c32574fe004e1f26/$FILE/11.11.2008.doc).
- 26 Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East Alexander Saltanov, interview, April 14, 2009, interview posted on [http://www.ln.mid.ru/bl.nsf/78b919b523f2fa20c3256fa3003e9536/d33bdd3fed5b4b16c325759a0020ebbe/\\$FILE/15.04.2009.doc](http://www.ln.mid.ru/bl.nsf/78b919b523f2fa20c3256fa3003e9536/d33bdd3fed5b4b16c325759a0020ebbe/$FILE/15.04.2009.doc).
- 27 Speech by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at Sharm al-Sheikh, March 2, 2009, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/2fee282eb6df40e643256999005e6e8c/eb6c3ce003a7ab1ec325756e003a2862?OpenDocument.
- 28 Barack Obama's official address in Cairo, June 4, 2009.
- 29 Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East Alexander. Saltanov, interview with *The Diplomat*, January 2009, <http://www.russianembassy.org.il/article.php?id=509>.
- 30 Address by Ambassador Stegny at Tel Aviv University, March 11, 2009.
- 31 www.mid.ru.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Fyodor Lukyanov, "Russia-NATO – Strengthening the Adversary," *Russia in Global Affairs*, April 6, 2009, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/red-col/0/11462.html>.
- 34 Andrey Frolov, "Iran's Delivery System Capabilities," *Security Index* (Summer/Fall 2007): pp.31-50.
- 35 *Udmurdsкая Pravda*, January 12, 2007.
- 36 Frolov, "Iran's Delivery System Capabilities."
- 37 Jessica Tuchman Mathews, Sergey Lavrov, "Foreign Minister Lavrov on Russia-US Relations: Perspectives and Prospects for the New Agenda," May 7, 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/?fa=eventDetail&id=1336&prog=zru>.
- 38 "Medvedev Relates to a Dialogue with Cairo as a Strategic Dialogue," ITAR-TASS news agency, July 14, 2008. On the other hand it is still unclear how Russia will react to Egypt's decision to sign the political declaration during the "south corridor" summit in Prague (May 2009). The document signed by Egypt, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Georgia was not supported by Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It supports the construction of a new Nabucco pipeline that will transport Caspian gas to Europe bypassing Russia.

39 Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East*.

40 Lavrov said in Damascus on May 24, 2009: "We are convinced that, based on the positions which at Russia's initiative were confirmed in the UN Security Council on May 11, it will be possible for all the parties to work to prevent a rollback in the peace process and to resume it not from a clean slate but on a solid international legal basis. The international legal framework, which the Security Council has unambiguously confirmed, consists of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Roadmap and the Madrid principles and, what's particularly important, the Arab peace initiative that presupposes vacation of all occupied territories in exchange for the recognition of Israel by all Arab countries. I shall stress that the Arab peace initiative is not just the initiative of Arab states; it has been unanimously backed by all 57 member countries of the OIC," http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/D966237B8355C881C32575C1003362FC.