

Medvedev: Russia Won't Close its Economy, Just Turning to Asia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev speaks during a session of the International Investment Forum "Sochi-2014" in Sochi, September 19, 2014.

SOCHI, Russia — Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Friday that Russia would not isolate its sanctions-hit economy from the West but said improving relations with Asian countries has become a key strategy.

Sanctions imposed by the West over Moscow's involvement in the separatist conflict in Ukraine have limited Russia's access to foreign cash, sent the ruble to historic lows and slowed economic growth to a crawl.

Moscow in retaliation has imposed sanctions on Western countries. Some politicians and economists, including the head of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and an economic adviser to President Vladimir Putin, Sergei Glazyev, have called for isolating the Russian economy from Western markets.

"Any discussions about fundamental changes to the model of economic development, in the direction of a mobilized or closed economy, are inappropriate and unnecessary," Medvedev told a business conference in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

He said Russia is ready to work on improving its relations with the European Union and the United States, which are currently at their worst since the fall of the Soviet Union, but said Moscow's partners must "learn to listen to Russia."

"History shows that any attempts to put pressure on Russia have been unsuccessful," he told a crowd of mostly Russian businessmen and politicians.

Asian Strategy

Following Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in March and Western penalties for the move, Moscow has embarked on a pivot to Asia, signing a series of trade and business agreements, mainly with China.

The country's top gas producer, state-controlled Gazprom, struck a 30-year \$400 billion gas supply deal with China in May.

Medvedev said things are not moving as fast as needed when it comes to improving those relations. But Russia's pivot East is an "absolutely objective" development, he said.

"I hope everyone understands that our new strategy in Asia is not senseless revenge against Europe as it is presented by many political analysts in the West," Medvedev said.

"This is the natural course of events and a thought-through response to the changing conditions of economic development."

Much work is still needed to improve political and corporate trust between Russia and Asian partners, but the benefits of the tactical shift would be far-reaching, he said.

"The growth of our country's role in the Asian region ... without doubt contributes to raising our authority in other places as well, including in the West."

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