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Transatlantic Unity on Russia**Op-ed by Secretary Rice on Russian relations with U.S. and Europe**

The following op-ed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "Transatlantic Unity on Russia," appeared in multiple European newspapers the week of September 24 and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

(begin byliner)

Transatlantic Unity on Russia
By Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

For much of the past month, the world's focus has turned to Russia. We took up the urgent, initial challenge of supporting Georgia after the Russian attack – a challenge that we are, for now, successfully meeting. The main question going forward – which I addressed at length in a speech last Thursday – is, what do the events of the past month mean for Russia's relationship with the world, especially the United States and Europe?

The circumstances surrounding last month's conflict are well-known. Mistakes were made on both sides, but the response of Russia's leaders – invading a sovereign state across an internationally-recognized border, and then seeking to dismember it by recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia – was disproportionate. And the responsibility for this behavior lies not with Russia's neighbors, not with NATO enlargement, and not with the United States, but with Russia's leaders.

Perhaps more disturbing, though, is that Russia's attack fits into a worsening pattern of behavior over several years – among other things, its use of oil and gas as tools of coercion, its threat to target peaceful nations with nuclear weapons, and its curtailment of law and liberty at home. The emerging picture is an increasingly authoritarian and aggressive Russia.

The attack on Georgia has brought us to a critical moment – but not a deterministic one. Russia's leaders are making some unfortunate choices. But they can make different ones. Russia's future is in Russia's hands. But its choices will be shaped, in part, by the actions of others – especially the United States and our European allies.

Russia's invasion of Georgia has achieved – and will achieve – no enduring strategic objective. And our strategic goal now is to make it clear to Russia's leaders that their choices are putting Russia on a one-way path to self-imposed isolation and international irrelevance.

Accomplishing this goal will require the resolve and the unity of the United States and Europe. We cannot afford to validate the prejudices that some Russian leaders seem to have: that if you pressure free nations – if you bully, threaten, and lash out – we will cave in and eventually concede. The United States and Europe must stand up to this kind of behavior, and not allow Russia's aggression to achieve any benefit.

We and our European allies are therefore acting as one in supporting Georgia. We are leading the world's effort to help Georgia rebuild. The door to a Euro-Atlantic future remains wide open to Georgia, and our alliance will continue to work to make that future a reality.

At the same time, the United States and Europe are supporting – unequivocally – the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Russia's neighbors. And we will not allow Russia to wield a veto over the future of our Euro-Atlantic community – neither what states we offer membership, nor the choice of those states to accept it. We have made this particularly clear to our friends in Ukraine.

The United States and Europe are deepening our cooperation in pursuit of greater energy independence. We will expand and defend an open global energy economy from abusive practices. There cannot be one set of rules for Russia, Inc. and another for everyone else.

Finally, the United States and Europe will not allow Russia's leaders to have it both ways – drawing benefits from international norms, markets, and institutions, while challenging their very foundations. There is no third way. A 19th century Russia and a 21st century Russia cannot operate in the world side by side. To reach its full potential, Russia needs to be fully integrated into the international political and economic order. But Russia is in the precarious position of being half in and half out. Russia depends on the world for its success, and it cannot change that.

Already, Russia's leaders are seeing a glimpse of what the future might look like if they persist with their aggressive behavior. In contrast to Georgia's position, Russia's international standing is worse now than at any time since 1991. Russia's civil nuclear cooperation with the United States is not going anywhere now. Russia's leaders are imposing pain on their nation's economy. Their bid to join the World Trade Organization is now in jeopardy. So too is their bid to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

But perhaps the worst fallout of all for Moscow is that its behavior has fundamentally called into question whose vision of Russia's future is really guiding the country. There was a time recently when the new president of Russia laid out a positive and forward-looking vision of his nation's future. This vision took account of Russia's vulnerabilities, called for greater reform at home, and most importantly, recognized that Russia cannot afford a relationship with the world that is based on antagonism and alienation.




By necessity, the United States and Europe will continue to pursue our shared interests with Russia – including fighting terrorism, stopping Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, shaping a secure Middle East where there is peace between Palestinians and Israelis, and preventing the Security Council from reverting to the gridlocked institution it was during the Cold War. But it would be a real shame if our relationship with Russia never rose above the level of interests – for the best relationships are those among states that also share goals, aspirations, and values.

Whether Russia's leaders overcome their nostalgia for another time, and reconcile themselves to the sources of power and the exercise of power in the 21st century, still remains to be seen. The decision is Russia's, and Russia's alone. And we hope that Russia's leaders choose responsibly – for the sake of their people and the sake of the world.

(end byliner)

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