



CHECHNYA PEACE FORUM

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Letter published in *The Times*

Double standards in a dangerous world

Sir, In response to David Miliband's article in your newspaper ['Russia will not benefit from its aggression,' Aug 19th], it is increasingly apparent that West must treat the conflict between Russia and Georgia as an opportunity to help resolve the problems of the Caucasus as a whole.

Georgia's democratic credentials have been tarnished by its actions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Russia's brazen hypocrisy over its approach to independence movements is clear for all to see. Yet, it is obvious that a democratic and peaceful resolution to the conflict must recognise the right of South Ossetians and the Abkhaz to vote and have a say in their own governance. If they choose to hold a referendum over joining the Russian Federation, then that is also their right.

However, by the same logic, Russia must be told in no uncertain terms that they cannot pick and choose when these principles are applied. It must be made clear that accepting the right of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to hold a referendum is contingent on extending the same right to Chechnya, following the precedent that was set in Kosovo. Such a result would bring some long awaited peace and stability to the Caucasus and a positive outcome for all involved.

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