

Crimea Cannot Be Blamed for Joining Russia: Former French President Sarkozy

By [RT](#)

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Crimea cannot be blamed for seceding from Ukraine – a country in turmoil – and choosing to join Russia, said former president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy. He also added that Ukraine “is not destined to join the EU.”

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“We are part of a common civilization with Russia,” said Sarkozy, speaking on Saturday at the congress of the Union for a Popular Movement Party (UMP), which the former president heads.

“The interests of the Americans with the Russians are not the interests of Europe and Russia,” he said adding that *“we do not want the revival of a Cold War between Europe and Russia.”*

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Regarding Crimea’s choice to secede from Ukraine when the country was in the midst of political turmoil, Sarkozy noted that the residents of the peninsula cannot be accused for doing so.

“Crimea has chosen Russia, and we cannot blame it [for doing so],” he said pointing out that *“we must find the means to create a peacekeeping force to protect Russian speakers in Ukraine.”*

In March 2014 over 96 percent of Crimea’s residents – the majority of whom are ethnic Russians – voted to secede from Ukraine to reunify with Russia. The decision was prompted by a massive uprising in Ukraine, that led to the ouster of its democratically elected government, and the fact that the first bills approved by the new Kiev authorities were infringing the rights of ethnic Russians.



Simferopol residents on the central square watching celebratory fireworks after the ascension of Crimea into the Russian Federation. (RIA Novosti/Taras Litvinenko)

Concerning Kiev's hopes of joining the EU in the near future Sarkozy voiced the same position as had been previously expressed by some EU leaders. *"It is not destined to join the EU," he said. "Ukraine must preserve its role as a bridge between Europe and Russia."*

While the West has been criticizing Russia's stance on Crimea, the Russian Foreign Minister said on Saturday that the peninsula's residents had the right to "self-determination" citing the March referendum. He gave the example of Kosovo, which despite not holding a referendum, was allowed to leave Serbia and create its own state.

"In Crimea what happened complies with the UN Charter on self-determination," Lavrov said during his speech at the Munich security conference. *"The UN Charter has several principles, and the right of a nation for self-determination has a key position."*

On Saturday, French President Francois Hollande [called](#) for broader autonomy for the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Lugansk. They need *"rather strong"* autonomy from Kiev, he said speaking on France 2 TV.

The comment comes after Hollande together with German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Kiev and Moscow this week for talks on the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict, that has escalated in January.

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