

Irresponsible Risk-Takers in Command

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#), [US NATO](#)

[War Agenda](#)

“War prosperity is like the prosperity that an earthquake or a plague brings.”

“War...is harmful, not only to the conquered but to the conqueror.”

“To defeat the aggressors is not enough to make peace durable. The main thing is to discard the ideology that generates war.”

“The root of the evil is not the construction of new, more dreadful weapons. It is the spirit of conquest.” (Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973))

There are people in charge who think that provocation and aggression can be acceptable government policy. The sudden conflict between the former Soviet republic of Georgia and Russia in the [Caucasus](#) in Eurasia is a good case in point.

What’s behind this conflict that erupted last Friday at the outset of the Beijing Olympic Games? First and foremost, let us keep in mind that the [real and first aggressors](#) in this conflict is the belligerent government of [Georgia](#), led by an impulsive politician named [Mikhail Saakashvili](#), who is openly supported by the governments of the U.S. and of Israel. Early Friday, August 8, Georgian tanks and infantry, assisted by American and Israeli military advisers, launched an early morning massive artillery and rocket barrage on the capital of breakaway South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, thus directly provoking Russia, which had soldiers in that province.

At first blush, most people could easily arrive at the conclusion that Saakashvili is completely out of his mind for having declared war against its neighbor Russia, a country more than 50 times larger, with the goal of reoccupying the Russian-speaking province of [South Ossetia](#), *de facto* independent since 1992. The only logical explanation would seem to be that the Georgia President believed, or had some form of assurance, that the Bush-Cheney administration would side militarily with him. Did he really believe that the Bush-Cheney administration, already deeply involved in two military conflicts in Iraq and in Afghanistan, would risk a world war to salvage an [oil pipeline](#) and a newly acquired colony in that far away part of the world? This would seem to be another insane idea.

It is a little known fact that the [U.S.](#) and [Israel](#) have been training and arming the Georgian military since 2002. This situation is tantamount to risking a restart of the [Cold War](#) with Russia. It has also sown the seeds of a much larger conflict in that part of the world by encouraging Georgia to embark on military manoeuvres. Little Georgia (4.5 m. inhabitants)

even has 2,000 troops in Iraq, soldiers that the U.S. is now quickly flying back to Georgia. This goes a long way towards explaining how involved the Bush-Cheney administration and its Israeli surrogates have been in sticking it in the eyes of Russia. And now, the Russian bear is reacting. This is brinkmanship at a high level.

In the summer of 1914, a similar miscalculation resulted in igniting [World War I](#).

This was a conflict that started with a single death (the assassination of [Archduke Franz Ferdinand](#) on June 28, 1914) but which resulted, in the end, in 40 million deaths. The catastrophe was the result of a [chain reaction](#) of war declarations by various countries involved in the affairs of other countries. This remains an example of how relatively minor regional conflicts can escalate into conflagrations when hotheads are in command. The Georgia-Russia spat represents a good opportunity for the [U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon](#), to show leadership and not to let things degenerate. Indeed, there is always the possibility that one politician after another will try not to lose face by escalating things. For example, the U.N Secretary-General should obtain from the Security Council the mandate to visit immediately the two capitals directly involved, and he should attempt to broker an immediate face-saving end to the hostilities. He should persuade the Russian leaders not to overreact to the Georgian President's provocations. As for the latter, he has demonstrated that he is not worthy of occupying his functions.

Time is of the essence in such circumstances, because there are always some interests that stand to profit from a worsening situation.

For one, the presumptive Republican presidential candidate John McCain, who never met a war he didn't like, has already tried to stoke the fire of conflict by calling for the 26-country [NATO](#) to get involved in what is essentially a local ethnic conflict. On the campaign trail, [John McCain](#) said: "We should immediately call a meeting of the North Atlantic Council to assess Georgia's security and review measures NATO can take to contribute to stabilizing this very dangerous situation."

Incredibly, the republican candidate is attempting to profit politically from this faraway crisis by advancing the frightening prospect of turning a small regional conflict into a world war. This could have something to do with the fact that Mr. McCain's foreign policy adviser is [a former lobbyist](#) for the government of Georgia and is a former neocon lobbyist for the U.S. military invasion of Iraq. This would seem to be a direct conflict of interests and reason enough for Mr. McCain to refrain from throwing oil on the fire. I have said it and this incident confirms it; this man would seem to be unfit to be in charge of a heavily armed country.

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