

Putin would die laughing if he read this week's American newspapers. The president, George Bush, declared the Russian invasion of Georgia "disproportionate and unacceptable". This is taken as a put-down to the vice-president, Dick Cheney, who declared the invasion "will not go unanswered", apparently something quite different. Bush says that great powers should not go about "toppling governments in the 21st century", as if he had never done such a thing. Cheney says that the invasion has "damaged Russia's standing in the world", as if Cheney gave a damn.

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