

The outcome of six grim days of bloodshed in the Caucasus has triggered an outpouring of the most nauseating hypocrisy from western politicians and their captive media. As talking heads thundered against Russian imperialism and brutal disproportionality, US vice-president Dick Cheney, faithfully echoed by Gordon Brown and David Miliband, declared that "Russian aggression must not go unanswered". George Bush denounced Russia for having "invaded a sovereign neighbouring state" and threatening "a democratic government". Such an action, he insisted, "is unacceptable in the 21st century".

Could these by any chance be the leaders of the same governments that in 2003 invaded and occupied - along with Georgia, as luck would have it - the sovereign state of Iraq on a false pretext at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives? Or even the two governments that blocked a ceasefire in the summer of 2006 as Israel pulverised Lebanon's infrastructure and killed more than a thousand civilians in retaliation for the capture or killing of five soldiers?

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