



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on December 8, 2011

Rand Paul Blocks Efforts to Grant Georgia NATO Membership

In recent months, Paul, the constitutionalist, libertarian-leaning Senator has underscored his Republican credentials, sponsoring a range of GOP-led legislation, including a jobs bill with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), a bill that would prioritize smaller harbors for dredging work with Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), and with his fellow Kentuckian, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), a bill that would repeal net neutrality.



But last week, Paul's amicable collaboration with his Republican colleagues came to a halt, as he sparred with Sen. Rubio, a fellow Tea Party favorite, over a foreign policy proposal critics say could have dealt a terminal blow to U.S.-Russian relations. In a bipartisan effort, the amendment "called for the President to lead a diplomatic effort to get approval of Georgia's Membership Action Plan during the upcoming NATO summit in Chicago," [said](#) a Rubio spokesman.

Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.) supported the measure, [telling](#) a group of journalists in Tbilisi, "The United States strongly supports Georgia's accession to NATO and I hope that Russian President [Dmitry] Medvedev's objection will not come true from this point of view." Dreier went on to say, "The day will come, and I hope it will happen soon, when we'll see Georgia in NATO, and if President Medvedev doesn't wish to see Georgia as a NATO member and that is his goal, I would like his wish fail."

Paul firmly opposed Rubio's amendment, suggesting that expanding NATO in this sensitive region could entangle the United States in Georgia's affairs with a nuclear-armed Russia, potentially risking a U.S.-Russian war.

The clash between the two Republicans would have gone largely unnoticed if it wasn't for Jack Hunter, co-author of Sen. Paul's book *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* and the Ron Paul campaign's official blogger, who addressed the issue in a column for the *Daily Caller*. In describing the entanglement, Hunter [wrote](#), "A few days ago, some Republican senators attempted to lay the groundwork for a shooting war with Russia. I wish I were exaggerating." He continued:

Last week, while most senators were focused on the important national issues of war funding and Americans' constitutional liberties, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) seemed more concerned with the fate of a foreign country. Behind the scenes, Rubio moved to have a unanimous consent vote that would have hastened Georgia's entry into NATO. The unanimous consent vote never happened



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because Senator Rand Paul single-handedly prevented it.

This is not a triviality. Make no mistake: Bringing Georgia into NATO could lead to a new military conflict for the United States, which is why any move that would facilitate Georgia's entry into the alliance should be publicly debated. Rubio's attempt to push this through by unanimous consent — that is to say, without any formal debate or vote — is highly suspect and calls into question the senator's better judgment.

Hunter also drew John McCain into the scuffle, as he translated the Arizona Senator's 2008 statement, "Today, we're all Georgians," as a proclamation of "support for the nation of Georgia, which that year became involved in a brief military conflict with neighboring Russia over who had claim to the region of South Ossetia." Indeed, the 2008 South Ossetia conflict spurred an international dispute, with both Georgia and Russia facing strong criticism from world leaders.

Paleoconservative and former GOP presidential challenger Pat Buchanan penned a [column](#) in August 2008, amidst the Russo-Georgian conflict, posing the question, "Who is Randy Scheunemann?" Scheunemann was John McCain's principal foreign policy advisor and is a [paid lobbyist](#) for the country of Georgia. He is a "dual loyalist," asserted Buchanan, "a foreign agent whose assignment is to get America committed to spilling the blood of her sons for client regimes who have made this moral mercenary a rich man." In examining McCain's declaration of solidarity with Georgia, Buchanan wrote:

From January 2007 to March 2008, the McCain campaign paid Scheunemann \$70,000 — pocket change compared to the \$290,000 his Orion Strategies banked in those same 15 months from the Georgian regime of Mikheil Saakashvili.

What were Mikheil's marching orders to Tbilisi's man in Washington? Get Georgia a NATO war guarantee. Get America committed to fight Russia, if necessary, on behalf of Georgia.

Had [Scheunemann succeeded], U.S. soldiers and Marines from Idaho and West Virginia would be killing Russians in the Caucasus, and dying to protect Scheunemann's client, who launched this idiotic war the night of Aug. 7. That people like Scheunemann hire themselves out to put American lives on the line for their clients is a classic corruption of American democracy.

Buchanan's 2008 assertion relays a critical message, and that is Georgia's entry into NATO would commit the United States to fighting for Georgia. And as he describes, if Georgia had been a part of NATO at the time of the South Ossetia conflict, the United States would have been drawn into a war against Russia.

In that respect, and in regard to Senator Paul's bold opposition to the amendment, some critics are noting that Paul's opposition could have single-handedly prevented a U.S.-Russian war.

Photo of Rand Paul: AP Images



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