Did We Have Guns of August Again?
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There must be something about late summer that turns some countries belligerent.
World War I began in August, 1914 and World War II started September 1, 1939. In
September of 1806, Prussia and Russia declared war on Napoleon. All through the
Middle Ages, wars also began in the fall, as did the famous war between England and
France, ending in the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 (see Shakespeare\222s Henry V). Just a
coincidence or is there a historic reason for this?

Armies travel on their stomachs, as Napoleon knew well. You must make certain that
there is enough food provided for them\227unless you are talking about a really rag-tag
army that steals food from the peasants as they pass through. For this reason, most
wars have started in the Fall, after the harvest has come in.

Other historic reasons would be that when men are needed to plant or harvest, they
are not available for military service. You cannot have both a war and a harvest.
But there are always the assumptions by the aggressor that they can win the war
quickly\227and not have to worry about the next harvest. Of course, this has rarely
been true.

Autumn was a fine time to begin a war, as Hitler and Napoleon both thought. They had
such good armies that they expected speed would intimidate their enemies into
surrender. That did work for a short time, but this notion did not have legs. When
the Germans invaded Russia, they seem to have forgotten what happened to Napoleon
when he did the same in 1806. Starting in Fall is one thing, but continuing into a
dragged-out affair in Winter is something else\227and Russia has devastating winters.
In addition, Russia has rarely had enough food\227even after a good harvest\227because
their agriculture has been notoriously backward. They were used to it; the French and
Germans were not.

Although the concerns of Henry V, Napoleon, and Hitler are no longer ours, the
pattern of late summer/early fall wars still survives in lesser developed areas. Al
Qaeda\222s 9/11 attack on us was hoped to start a global conflict which they thought
would rouse the hostility of the entire Muslim world. (They were wrong.)

But just scanning the papers today, we can see other potential Guns of August afoot.
North Korea is threatening the US and South Korea that they will respond (with nukes)
if we continue to accuse them of torpedoing a peaceful South Korean ship, killing all
on board. They deny culpability; South Korea torpedoed themselves, they say. Are they
being the \223Mouse that Roared\224 in thinking that they could launch a nuke against us
with no response?

North Korea\222s best buddy, Mahmood Ahmadinejad, Iran\222s mouthy president, also
threatened dire reprisals against the United States if we stop any of their ships
under the UN\222s sanction program against them. Are they really willing to take us on
without concern for consequences?

And the third best buddy, Venezuela\222s President Hugo Chavez, was saber rattling
against its neighbor, Colombia, which has complained to the UN and Organization of
American States that Venezuela is aiding and abetting a criminal cartel of guerillas
across the Colombian border. This is certainly looking as if it could set off the
first intra-Latin-American war in over a century, even though they recently had a
kiss-and-make-up meeting. And, of course, Chavez threatens to cut sale of oil to the
US if they are attacked. (One might ask what Chavez will do for money if they
withhold the oil. Eat it?)

What do these three buddies have in common? They are all short, impertinent,
boastful, and belligerent. They are also all delusional. And in the last analysis,
they are all losers. And with lesser-developed countries, watch the food supply and
estimate the harvest. Also be aware of the games that losers play--
psychological games aimed at their own people\227and us, if we are foolish enough to
believe them. Ill-warranted pride goes before a fall.

656 words

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