



THE WINNING ARGUMENT: John McCain and National Security

I. John McCain will be George Bush's third term on Iraq.

- John McCain said staying in Iraq for 100 years “[would be fine with me](#)” and supports maintaining a permanent U.S. troop presence in Iraq. He has tried to defend this comment as referring to 100 years of peace – like Germany or South Korea – but has not said how long he would leave American troops in the middle of a hostile conflict.

II. McCain adheres to the same extreme Neoconservative ideology as Bush.

- John McCain was a Neocon before George Bush was a Neocon. John McCain's circle of foreign policy advisors is made up of the [same people](#) who pushed for the war in Iraq.
 - McCain's chief foreign policy advisor, Randy Scheunemann, was the [Director](#) of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, a Neocon front group that lobbied the Bush administration to go to war with Iraq even before 9/11. McCain's senior strategist, Charlie Black, also lobbied on behalf of Ahmed Chalabi.
- McCain doesn't understand diplomacy and would continue to alienate our allies. He called our closest allies [“vacuous and posturing,”](#) and referred to France and Germany as adversaries. Instead of being strategic about our relationship with Russia, McCain blustered that he would [kick them out of the G8.](#)
- McCain ignores critical details about the Middle East, including the differences between Sunnis and Shiites, glossing over important distinctions between different groups and movements and instead [lumping them together](#) into a united “Islamofascist” front.
- On Iran, McCain would ignore the diplomatic approach that led to progress with North Korea and pursue Bush's hard-line, [militaristic](#) approach that has done nothing but strengthen Iran's hand in the region.

III. McCain was one of the biggest cheerleaders of the Iraq war.

- McCain was right when he said, “[no one has supported President Bush on Iraq more than I have.](#)”
- McCain was one of the staunchest defenders of the Administration's war strategy:
 - McCain misjudged the post-war situation. On “Meet the Press” in 2002, McCain said, “I believe that it [the war] will not be nearly as difficult as some allege.”ⁱ On “Meet the Press,” he said “I believe that this conflict is still going to be relatively short.”ⁱⁱ In 2003, McCain assured Katie Couric that “the Iraqi people will greet us as liberators.”ⁱⁱⁱ In a 2003 *New York Times* op-ed, McCain wrote that the Iraq War would [“significantly improve the stability of the region.”](#) On “Hardball” in 2003, McCain incorrectly stated, “There's not a history of clashes



that are violent between Sunnis and Shiah. So I think they can probably get along.”^{iv} In April 2003, he claimed that “the end is very much in sight,” and that all that stood in the way would be “a short period of chaos.”^v

- McCain repeatedly defended the Bush administration’s Iraq strategy, including troop levels. In 2003, McCain said he had [“no qualms about our strategic plans.”](#) Shortly after the invasion, he said the Bush administration’s plan was “an appropriate strategy.”^{vi} Years later, he specifically defended the original troop levels sent to Iraq, telling Tim Russert in 2005, “I think we have in numbers [sic] probably enough.”^{vii} In a 2004 interview on ABC News’ “This Week,” McCain said, “I’m confident we’re on the right course.”^{viii}
- McCain repeatedly defended Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. In the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal in 2004, McCain said on “Hannity and Colmes,” “Yes, today I do and I believe he’s done a fine job,” McCain responded. “He’s an honorable man.”^{ix} Also in 2004, McCain told John Gibson that he was “an admirer of Secretary Rumsfeld,” that he “didn’t think he could be judged yet,” and that “it’s totally premature to call for any change in his status.”^x In 2006, McCain [refused to join calls for Rumsfeld’s resignation.](#)
- McCain greatly misjudged the cost of the war. Echoing former Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz’s infamous prediction that Iraq could “finance its own reconstruction,” McCain said in 2003, “As far as the cost is concerned, Iraqis have vast oil reserves and they, I’m sure, would shoulder the cost of the transition.”^{xi}

ENDNOTES

ⁱ NBC, “Meet the Press,” 9/22/02.

ⁱⁱ NBC, “Meet the Press,” 3/30/03.

ⁱⁱⁱ NBC, “The Today Show,” 3/20/03.

^{iv} MSNBC, “Hardball,” 4/23/03.

^v ABC News, “Good Morning America,” 4/9/03.

^{vi} NBC, “Meet the Press,” 3/30/03.

^{vii} NBC, “Meet the Press,” 2/20/05.

^{viii} ABC News, “This Week,” 3/07/04.

^{ix} Fox News Channel, “Hannity & Colmes,” 5/12/04.

^x Fox News, “The Big Story,” 5/10/04.

^{xi} Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, 3/27/03; [National Journal](#), 2/15/03.