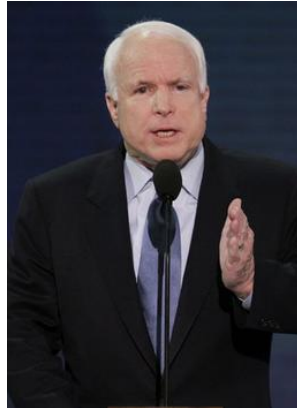




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John McCain

Republican National Convention Address



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Thank you my fellow Republicans, and thank you Lindsey.

I'm truly grateful for the privilege of addressing you. This week, millions of Americans, not all Republicans, will weigh our claim on their support for the two men who have led our country in these challenging times with moral courage and firm resolve.

So I begin with the words of a great American from the other Party, given at his Party's convention in the year I was born. My purpose is not imitation, for I can't match his eloquence, but respect for the relevance in our time of his rousing summons to greatness of an earlier generation of Americans.

At a time of deep distress at home, as tyranny strangled the aspirations to liberty of millions, and as war clouds gathered in the East and West, Franklin Delano Roosevelt accepted his Party's nomination by observing: "There's a mysterious cycle in human events. To some generations much is given. Of other generations much is expected. This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny."

The awful events of September 11, 2001 declared a war we were vaguely aware of, but hadn't really comprehended how near the threat was, and how terrible were the plans of our enemies. It's a big thing, this war.



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It's a fight between a just regard for human dignity and a malevolent force that defiles an honorable religion by disputing God's love for every soul on earth. It's a fight between right and wrong, good and evil.

And my friends, should our enemies acquire for their arsenal the chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons they seek, this war will become a much bigger thing. So it is, whether we wished it or not, that we have come to the test of our generation, to our rendezvous with destiny. And much is expected of us. We are engaged in a hard struggle against a cruel and determined adversary. Our enemies have made clear the danger they pose to our security and the very essence of our culture -- liberty.

Only the most deluded of us could doubt the necessity of this war. Like all wars, this one will have its ups and downs. But we must fight. We must. The sacrifices borne in our defense are not shared equally by all Americans. But all Americans must share a resolve to see this war through to a just end. We must not be complacent at moments of success, and we must not despair over setbacks. We must learn from our mistakes, improve on our successes, and vanquish this unpardonable enemy. If we do less we will fail the one mission no American generation has ever failed: to provide to our children a stronger, better country than the one we were blessed to inherit.

You remember how we felt when the serenity of a bright September morning was destroyed by a savage atrocity so hostile to all human virtue we could scarcely imagine any human being capable of it. We were united first in sorrow and anger, then in recognition; we were attacked not for a wrong we had done, but for who we are -- a nation united in a kinship of ideals, committed to the notion that the people are sovereign, not governments, not armies, not a pitiless theocracy, not kings, mullahs or tyrants, but the people.

In that moment, we were not different races. We were not poor or rich. We were not Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative. We were not two countries. We were Americans. All of us, despite the differences that enliven our politics, are united in the one big idea that freedom is our birthright and its defense is always our first responsibility. All other responsibilities come second. We must not lose sight of that as we debate among us who should bear the greatest responsibility for keeping us safe and free. We must, whatever our disagreements, stick together in this great challenge of our time.

My friends in the Democratic Party -- and I'm fortunate to call many of them my friends -- assure us they share the conviction that winning the war against terrorism is our government's most important obligation. I don't doubt their sincerity. They emphasize that military action alone won't protect us, that this war has many fronts: in courts, financial institutions, in the shadowy world of intelligence, and in diplomacy. They stress that America needs the help of her friends to combat an evil that threatens us all, that our alliances are as important to victory as are our armies.

We agree. And as we've been a good friend to other countries in moments of shared perils, so we have good reason to expect their solidarity with us in this struggle. That is what the President believes.



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That is what the President believes. And thanks to his efforts we have received valuable assistance from many good friends around the globe, even if we have, at times, been disappointed with the reactions of some. I don't doubt the sincerity of my Democratic friends. And they should not doubt ours.

Our President will work with all nations willing to help us defeat this scourge that afflicts us all. War is an awful business. The lives of a nation's finest patriots are sacrificed. Innocent people suffer. Commerce is disrupted. Economies are damaged. Strategic interests shielded by years of statecraft are in danger, as the demands of war and diplomacy conflict. However just the cause, we should mourn for all that is lost when war claims its wages from us.

But there is no avoiding this war. We tried that, and our reluctance cost us dearly. And while this war has many components, we can't make victory on the battlefield harder to achieve so that our diplomacy is easier to conduct. That is not just an expression of strength. It is a measure of our wisdom.

That's why I commend to my country the re-election of President Bush, and the steady, experienced, public-spirited man who serves as our Vice-President, Dick Cheney.

Four years ago in Philadelphia, I spoke of my confidence that President Bush would accept the responsibilities that come with America's distinction as the world's only superpower. I promised he would not let America "retreat behind empty threats, false promises and uncertain diplomacy;" that he would "confidently defend our interests and values wherever they are threatened."

I knew my confidence was well-placed when I watched him stand on the rubble of the World Trade Center, with his arm around a hero of September 11th, and in our moment of mourning and anger, strengthen our unity and our resolve by promising to right this terrible wrong, and to stand up and fight for the values we hold dear.

He promised our enemies would soon hear from us. And so they did. So they did. He ordered American forces to Afghanistan and took the fight to our enemies and away from our shores, seriously injuring al Qaeda and destroying the regime that gave them safe haven. He worked effectively to secure the cooperation of Pakistan, a relationship that's critical to our success against al Qaeda. He encouraged other friends to recognize the peril that terrorism posed for them, and won their help in apprehending many of those who would attack us again, and in helping to freeze the assets they used to fund their bloody work.

After years of failed diplomacy and limited military pressure to restrain Saddam Hussein, President Bush made the difficult decision to liberate Iraq. Those who criticize that decision would have us believe that the choice was between a status quo that was well enough left alone, and, war. But there was no status quo to be left alone.



The years of keeping Saddam in a box were coming to a close. The international consensus that he be kept isolated and unarmed had eroded to the point that many critics of military action had decided the time had come again to do business with Saddam, despite his near daily attacks on our pilots, and his refusal, until his last day in power, to allow the unrestricted inspection of his arsenal. Our choice wasn't between a benign status quo and the bloodshed of war. It was between war and a graver threat.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Not our political opponents.



And certainly not a disingenuous filmmaker who would have us believe that Saddam's Iraq was an oasis of peace when in fact it was a place of indescribable cruelty, torture chambers, mass graves, and prisons that destroyed the lives of the small children inside their walls. Whether or not Saddam possessed the terrible weapons he once had and used, freed from international pressure and the threat of military action, he would have acquired them again.

My friends, the central security concern of our time is to keep such devastating weapons beyond the reach of terrorists who can't be dissuaded from using them by the threat of mutual destruction. We couldn't afford the risk posed by an unconstrained Saddam in these dangerous times. By destroying his regime we gave hope to a people long oppressed that if they have the courage to fight for it, they may live in peace and freedom. Most importantly -- Most importantly, our efforts may encourage the people of a region that has never known peace or freedom or lasting stability that they may someday possess these rights. I believe as strongly today as ever, the mission was necessary, achievable, and noble.

For his determination to undertake it, and for his unflagging resolve to see it through to a just end, President Bush deserves not only our support, but our admiration. As the President rightly reminds us, we are safer now than we were on September 11th, but we're not yet safe; we're not yet safe. We are still closer to the beginning than the end of this fight. We need a leader with the experience to make the tough decisions and the resolve to stick with them; a leader who will keep us moving forward even if it's easier to rest; and this President will not rest until America is stronger and safer still, and this hateful iniquity is vanquished. He has been tested and has risen to the most important challenge of our time, and I salute him. I salute his determination to make this world a better, safer, freer place. He has not wavered. He has not flinched from the hard choices. He will not yield. And neither will we.



I said earlier that the sacrifices in this war will not be shared equally by all Americans. The President is the first to observe -- most of the sacrifices fall, as they have before, to the brave men and women of our Armed Forces. We may be good citizens, but make no mistake, they are the very best of us. It's an honor to live in a country that is so well and so bravely defended by such patriots. May God bless them, the living and the fallen, as He has blessed us with their service. For their families, for their friends, for America, for mankind, they sacrifice to affirm that right makes might; that good triumphs over evil; that freedom is stronger than tyranny; and that love is greater than hate.

It's left to use to keep their generous benefaction alive, and our blessed, beautiful country worthy of their courage. We should be thankful for the privilege. Our nation's security doesn't depend on the heroism of every citizen. But we have to be worthy of the sacrifices made on our behalf. We have to love our freedom, not just for the material benefits it provides, not just for the autonomy it guarantees us, but for the goodness it makes possible. We have to love it as much, if not as heroically, as the brave Americans who defend us at the risk, and often the cost, of their lives.

No American alive today will ever forget what happened on the morning of September 11th. That day was the moment when the pendulum of history swung toward a new era. The opening chapter was tinged with great sadness and uncertainty. It shook us from our complacency in the belief that the Cold War's end had ushered in a time of global tranquility. But an absence of complacency should not provoke an absence of confidence. What our enemies have sought to destroy is beyond their reach. It cannot be taken from us. It can only be surrendered.

My friends, we are again met on the field of political competition with our fellow countrymen. It's more than appropriate: It's necessary that even in times of crisis we have these contests, and engage in spirited disagreement over the shape and course of our government. We have nothing to fear from each other. We are arguing over the means to better secure our freedom, and support the general welfare. But it should remain an argument among friends who share an unshaken belief that, in our great cause, and in the goodness of each other.

We are Americans first, Americans last, and Americans always.

Let us argue our differences. But remember we are not enemies, but comrades in a war against a real enemy, and take courage from the knowledge that our military superiority is matched only by the superiority of our ideals, and our unconquerable love for them.

Our adversaries are weaker than us in arms and men, but weaker still in causes. They fight to express a hatred for all that is good in humanity. We fight for love of freedom and justice, a love that is invincible. Keep that faith. Keep your courage. Stick together. Stay strong. Do not yield. Do not flinch. Stand up. Stand up with our President and fight.

We're Americans. We're Americans, and we'll never surrender. They will.