

Five threatening character flaws of John McCain

By Tom H. Hastings

COMMENTARY

There seems to be some confusion amongst the pundits about who 'won' the first presidential debate on September 26 (at the University of Mississippi between U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (Democrat-Illinois) and U.S. Sen. John McCain (Republican-Arizona)). Winning a debate was once about demonstrating intellectual command over the facts and logic surrounding an issue.

Americans are trained to look past the depth of arguments, however, to the shallow ad hominem jabs, and the talking heads reinforced that once again. So, all right. In an attempt to look toward actual, predictable effects of a McCain victory, we key off the debate to five notches in the key of catastrophe being cut and buffed by McCain.

One: McCain is ossified. Almost before he finished his second sentence, John McCain was saying, 'Again...,' as though he had no fresh thoughts beyond his rote response.

Two: McCain is reckless. He tut-tutted Obama about the latter's measured if militaristic statement that if he were president and received actionable intelligence about bin Laden operating at a specific location in the tribal areas of Northwest Pakistan, he would attack al-Qa'ida.

"You don't say that out loud," said McCain, as though he would do the same thing, but just make it a surprise to Pakistanis. Obama

explained and then noted that it was odd to hear such criticism from someone who sang songs about bombing Iran and discussed the "extinction" of North Korea.

Three: McCain is a spendthrift. He promised that he would be fiscally prudent about everything except "national defense." This is precisely the problem.

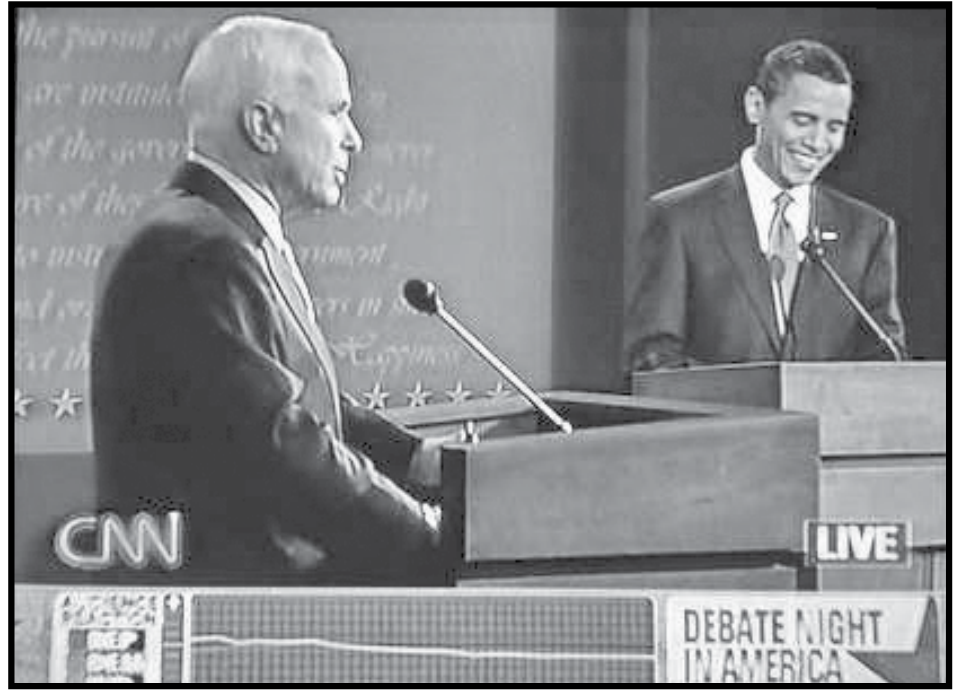
While Obama referred repeatedly to the ongoing waste of more than \$10 billion per month in Iraq, neither discussed the top end of the much more ruinous overall military budget, topping \$1 trillion now under Bush and threatening more of the same if not worse under McCain.

That has been the problem and McCain promises to drive it deeper.

Four: McCain is militaristic. He is from a military family, has a life and career built entirely around the military, and cannot seem to conceive of another world in which the U.S. is anything but a domineering brutal enforcer of its will around the world.

Virtually all his examples he used to illustrate any point revolved around his intimate obsession with the tools and practices of destruction. He is purblind to alternatives and only promises to exacerbate the American image and reality of a military giant jackbooting across the planet.

Five: McCain really represents a



profiteering elite, not honest, caring, working Americans. He consistently dismissed Obama's ideas about generating a more robust, fair, and secure economy and health care system as "naïve."

McCain argued for more tax breaks for the rich, for corporations, and for a tax code that would pretend your health care benefits should be counted as income and taxed.

Apparently, we are supposed to want to be rich so very badly that we will vote for the one who will run a lottery that will benefit the few and punish the many on the off chance that fate and Republican largesse will somehow grant us membership in that rarified circle of Masters of the Universe.

I am reminded of a Woody Allen moment in Annie Hall, when he was a passenger in a car driven by Annie's brother, who was reckless and unpredictable. Like Woody, we might try to excuse ourselves from John McCain's threat to drive the ship of state by noting that we are "due back on planet Earth."

I think McCain's entire philosophy is best summed up by one final quote from the debate.

McCain: We fixed it. Then we killed it.

Great, John. We'll try to maintain eye contact as we ease out of your room...

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