



Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on December 3, 2008

Obama's Choice of Hillary Clinton Signals He's Not Anti-War

(Obama also announced the same day his nomination of Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano as homeland security secretary, retired Marine General James L. Jones, Jr. as national security adviser, Eric H. Holder, Jr. as attorney general and Susan E. Rice as U.S. ambassador to the UN.)

The appointments mark a stark turn from Obama's position early in his career.

Obama had [spoken out strongly against the Iraq War as an Illinois state senator](#) before the war began, calling a possible Iraq war a "dumb war." In hindsight, it was a safe position politically to take, as his heavily Democratic district was solidly against the conflict.



But Obama continued to speak out against the Iraq occupation after becoming a U.S. senator. Only after establishing his apparent bona fides as the peace candidate did Obama begin to equivocate on Iraq.

The late Tim Russert asked Obama in a September 26, 2007 Democratic presidential debate: "Will you pledge that by January 2013, the end of your first term, more than five years from now, there will be no U.S. troops in Iraq?" Obama [declined to commit to ending the war](#) during the presidential term he was seeking, saying: "I think it's hard to project four years from now, and I think it would be irresponsible."

The prospect of five-and-a-half years of more war in Iraq should have thrown cold water on the hopes of the peace movement — conservative or liberal. After all, he had just conceded he might continue the war he once called "dumb" for the indefinite future.

But during the campaign, Obama remained the comparative peace candidate (by outward appearances, anyway), and Hillary Clinton stood as the candidate who called for another four years of the disastrous Bush administration foreign policy. Clinton didn't explain it in so many words, of course, but that's essentially what it was.

The November election contest was likewise one between a candidate who advocated a Republican big-government domestic policy (borrow and spend) and a Bush-style war policy versus a Democratic big-government domestic policy (tax and spend) and a peace platform.

Voters chose the person they perceived to be the peace candidate in both the primary and general elections. But Obama's cabinet picks on December 1 signaled that Americans are getting a war president. Obama [stated](#) that he had said during the campaign that he would remove "combat" troops from Iraq within 16 months but that it is "likely to be necessary — to maintain a residual force." He added that "it's also critical that we recognize that the situation in Afghanistan has been worsening" —



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a theater where he wants to send more troops.

"On the broad core vision of where America needs to go," he stressed regarding his views and Hillary Clinton's, "we are in almost complete agreement."

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