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Who Says the Surge Is Working?

Weak-kneed Democrats, that's who.

[Terry Michael](#) | March 14, 2008

The surge is smirking.

When it comes Iraq, neoconservative true believers have been allowed to set the bar of "success" below ground level. In this, they're aided by media siding with power instead of challenging it, all while congressional Democrats cower in their cloak rooms.

Approaching the fifth anniversary of "mission accomplished," we are a few improvised explosive devices away from the moment a 4,000th young American will die on some desert roadside.

As that new level of tragedy looms, far too many Democrats remain frightened by their "weak-on-defense" Cold War shadows, apparitions raised not just by the no-time-to-surrender bluster of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, John McCain, but by the neocon-lite faction of the Democratic Party itself.

"Third way" Democrats lost their national security minds somewhere around 1985, when the World War II generation played the role of swing voters. Promoting "progressive internationalism"—interventionism by another name—Beltway-based operatives like those at the Democratic Leadership Council hallucinate a political center of "Reagan Democrats," who in reality disappeared with the Berlin wall. The middle of the electorate is now made up of generally anti-war Baby Boomers, who came of political age in the 1960s and Vietnam.

It's difficult to report on a debate not taking place, especially when an influential rump group of the "opposition" colludes instead of opposes. Except for a few pieces in left-liberal journals and blogs, Democrats have simply allowed neoconservative propagandists to define the terms of what has become a one-sided monologue about "victory," voiced by elective warriors who employed deception about phantom weapons of mass destruction to market a multi-trillion dollar travesty; claimed a paper tiger thug was our enemy, when the real culprits of the 9/11 attacks still hide in caves, not spider holes; imagined Iraqi embrace of pluralistic democracy, in a tribal culture with no indigenous movement for it; and fielded an imperial American occupying force, drawing jihadists to Baghdad while fomenting civil war that raged outside a surreal "Green Zone," as our puppet government dithered.

Instead of making a case against the war, congressional Democrats shift their poll-driven

attention to "the economy, stupid." Democrats like Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who provided initial anti-war leadership, muzzle themselves with half-hearted statements like one she made on television February 10. "The purpose of the surge was to create a secure time...to bring reconciliation to Iraq. They have not done that." But then, she hastened to add: "The troops have succeeded, God bless them." So which is it, failure or success? Democratic "leaders" try to have it both ways, reminiscent of John Kerry in 2004.

The "liberal" newspapers which could have challenged the surge have used it either to justify their own support for the war, or have averted their eyes. The Washington Post's befuddled neocon editorial page engages in tortuous [revisionism](#), pointing a finger at everyone except itself for failures of the war it helped cheerlead.

The New York Times, theoretically anti-war, fails even to attempt rational argument against the surge's "success," and yields precious column space to an architect of the war and editor of its propaganda organ, Bill Kristol of *The Weekly Standard*.

Taking cues from the neocon play book, cable-babbling correspondents and print reporters ask simple-minded questions of squishy Democrats, phrased something like this one from CNN's Joe Johns at January's Democratic debate in South Carolina: "Now that the surge is succeeding, how are you going to counter John McCain's case for the war?"

So the war rages on. Weak-kneed Democrats fail to stand against it, and Republicans act like the jilted lover in British singer Dido's "White Flag," taking comfort in denial: "I will go down with this ship. I won't throw my hands up in surrender. There'll be no white flag above my door. I'm in love, and always will be."

The neocons will never give up their love affair with a fatal fantasy. And they'll take the rest of us down with their ship, as long as timid Democrats and a compliant press let them.

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