

The logo for azcentral.com, featuring the text "azcentral.com" in white on a dark blue background with a small red and yellow graphic above the 'a'.

**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P  
**Today | This Week**

## Dems make mistake on Iraq

Nov. 28, 2005 05:20 PM  
**By Thomas Cushman**

It has become painfully apparent that the Democratic Party has moved too far and too fast in its revisionist rewriting of the history of its involvement in the Iraq war. After the defeat of John Kerry, several thinking Democrats realized that they lost because Kerry equivocated on the war, renounced his earlier support of it, and threw his lot in with the anti-war faction, which had, at the time, little support in the American heartland.

The Democrats have benefited from two facts: that, over time, all populations grow war-weary and that negative reporting on the war begins to soften hard-won support for it. Sensing a sea change in public opinion, Democrats now feel emboldened to hack away at the president based on the increasing unpopularity of the war. This is normal politics, of course, but what distinguishes this strategy of self-renunciation on the part of Democrats who voted for war is that it has turned the war into a hostage for the advancement of their own political fortunes.

The Democrats, so eager to move in for the political kill, have not only embarrassed themselves by flatly contradicting their own historical statements but have shown themselves willing to kill the Iraqi experiment in democracy, to abandon the nascent Iraqi republic and retreat from the forces of Islamism and fascism in the Middle East all for the sake of their own political aggrandizement.

The recent call of the esteemed war veteran Rep. John Murtha for complete withdrawal is deeply troubling because it adds an air of authenticity to what are otherwise callow and self-serving attempts to sacrifice Iraq for political gain.

The Bush administration is quite right to expose the hypocritical and self-serving revisionism of the Democratic opposition. It is right to note there is a difference between being against the war and revising the history of the war.

Even though conventional wisdom holds that President Bush does not tolerate dissent, he has endured it throughout his entire presidency and held fast and firm in his conviction (which itself was reconfirmed in the past election) that he did the right thing by invading Iraq, toppling Saddam, liberating the Iraqi people and setting in motion one of the boldest democratic experiments in history.

The Democrats are right to criticize the handling of the war but have refused to acknowledge the great strides forward made in Iraq. Their revisionism now belies an even deeper abandonment of the ideals of liberal internationalism which once made the Democratic Party great.

In the past election, the American electorate was intelligent enough to see through John Kerry's duplicitous and Kafkaesque evasions ("I voted for the war before I voted against it"). One thought the Democrats had learned their lesson, but it appears they are now going back to the blatant denial of their own views, expecting that somehow this time the American people will buy it.

Bill Clinton took a remarkably hawkish line on Iraq that is now forgotten and even

signed the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, which made regime change the official policy of the United States. Yet now, he has declared the war a "big mistake" and his wife, the great Democratic hope for the next presidential election, has distanced herself from that position, but it would not be surprising to see her rally to his position after taking the political temperature on the eve of the next presidential election. For now, it is gratifying that she has resisted the Democratic implosion, and her continued political success depends on continuing to resist throwing her lot in with the anti-war Democrats from whom she has so nobly distanced herself in the past few years.

The Democrats are gambling they will be able to maintain this assault on Bush and the war for the next three years. They are gambling that the American people won't see through them like they did last time. This is a huge gamble, and it may well pay off for them in terms of recapturing some of their lost power. But if they succeed, the costs will be high.

The memory of dead American soldiers who fought for the national security of the United States and the freedom of the Iraqi people will be tarnished forever. Our enemies will see the abandonment as a surrender and a signal to intensify the assault on Western civilization.

Having toppled a dictator and set a process of democratization in motion, liberal duty calls for the provision of security and social reconstruction of a democratic society in Iraq. The Democratic plan for abandonment of the country is not only illiberal but a formula for disaster.

**Thomas Cushman is editor-in-chief of the "Journal of Human Rights" and a professor of sociology at Wellesley College.**

**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P**  
**Today | This Week**