

War Fraud With a Mirror

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The greatest war fraud is the funding of war by individuals who claim to oppose it and who vote against funding it whenever a bill is guaranteed to pass. On May 14, 2009, 60 congress members [voted](#) against \$85 billion to continue the war in Iraq and escalate the war in Afghanistan, plus \$12 billion more to buy the Pentagon airplanes it doesn't want and related extravagances. Of those 60, 51 were Democrats. Some of them made [beautiful and principled statements](#) about their No votes.

The Senate passed the bill as well, but added in the loaning to Europe of \$100 billion through the IMF with no oversight, apparently in order to [bail out](#) European bankers in a manner similar to the Wall Street bankster bailout approved of by approximately 16 Americans and a couple of dogs. (The Senate also added a ban on releasing photos of U.S. torture, but that is apparently being stripped out in conference committee.)

So, the question in the House ought to be how many MORE than 51 Democrats will now oppose the modified bill. It's not as if any of those 51 can imagine their constituents now approving of the thing. Nor do those 51 have campaign "contributors" pushing them to fund the IMF. Nor is the corporate media demanding it of them. And yet, very few of those 51 (I only know for certain of Dennis Kucinich and Maxine Waters) have committed to voting No on the war money now that the torture photo ban has been removed. And even with the IMF funding in there, it is not at all clear that many Democrats will vote No. Those who do may be members who voted Yes last time around, who support war money but oppose IMF funding. The corrupting factor, the reason many of the 51 are beginning to look like frauds, is party control. Rather than representing their constituents, Democrats are being asked to represent Nancy Pelosi. Because Republicans are expected to vote against the bill now, Pelosi actually needs most of the Democrats to pass it. So, the time for pretending to oppose wars is over.

This is not entirely new, of course. In 2007, 89 House Democrats and one Republican signed [a letter](#) promising not to vote for any more war money for Iraq except to fund a withdrawal. This was before the escalation in Afghanistan had been announced. Virtually all of those 90 quickly turned around and voted for funding for both wars. Virtually all of them are still in Congress and have voted repeatedly to fund the wars, having campaigned for reelection in "opposition" to the war in Iraq.

This year, [85 congress members](#) have signed onto a bill (HR 2404) to require some sort of exit strategy at some point in the future for Afghanistan, but the "leadership" has refused to make that measure part of the funding bill, and those 85 members have not suggested that they will vote no for that reason. At this point, those 85 members could easily cut a deal to force inclusion of the exit-strategy requirement, but nobody imagines they will.

Also last year, [73 Democrats in the House](#) were members of the Out of Iraq Caucus. Never did those 73 take a stand to force the United States out of Iraq, and there is no indication that they will do so now.

Many activist groups and blogs are lobbying for No votes, including: After Downing Street, Democrats.com, Fire Dog Lake, United for Peace and Justice, Voters for Peace, Just Foreign Policy, Hullabaloo, Salon, Mother Jones, Seminal, D-Day, Down With Tyranny, Docudharma, Declaration of Peace, Code Pink, congressional candidate Marcy Winograd, the Out of Iraq Bloggers Caucus, Progressive Democrats of America, World Can't Wait, US Labor Against the War, Iraq Veterans Against the War, the Young Turks, and many more.

Conspicuously absent from this campaign are groups and individuals that certainly appeared to oppose wars when those wars were labeled "Republican," including: True Majority, Win Without War, Moveon.org, Open Left, David Sirota, TPM, Campaign for America's Future, the Center for American Progress, and the American Friends Service Committee.

Of course, it is accepted wisdom that sooner or later, in one way or another, Congress will pass the war money. Accepted wisdom is often wrong, but the reason for it in this case is the power wielded by parties. Take my representative, Tom Perriello. He represents a fairly rightwing rural district of Virginia. He's never shown any indication of opposing wars, except by cosponsoring the bill for an eventual exit strategy. But virtually nobody in his district or anybody else's district favors the IMF loans. In fact, Perriello can expect to be hammered with Republican advertisements blaming him for giving \$100 billion to foreigners if he votes for a bill that includes the IMF loans. On the other hand, Perriello won his seat by a fraction of a percentage point after the Democratic Party gave him over a million dollars toward the end of his campaign. So there is a corrupting campaign "contribution," but it came from a political party.

Almost everything in this story is upside down. Republicans are opposing aid to foreign nations, whereas the IMF money isn't really aid. It's destructive and usurious loans used to compel nations to enact devastating policies. The IMF section of the bill is being debated as fiscally irresponsible or sound, while the fiscal irresponsibility of borrowing another \$97 billion to spend on wars is not even mentioned. Democrats are proposing improvements to the IMF but ignoring the damage to be done by the largest expense in the bill: the wars. And, over in the Senate, Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham are threatening to filibuster war money unless the ban on releasing torture photos is reinserted. That is, unless they can prevent one thing that they claim with some plausibility would endanger troops, they will do another thing that no Democrat has never dared try because people like Lieberman and Graham have always shouted that it would abandon troops to their deaths.

Now, here's a question for you. Has your representative ever claimed to "oppose" the war in Iraq or the escalation of the war in Afghanistan? Is he or she among the [51](#), or the [89](#), or the [85](#), or the [73](#)? If so, please phone them at 202-224-3121 and ask them to put our money where their mouth is.

David Swanson is the author of the upcoming book "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union" by Seven Stories Press. You can pre-order it for a discount price at <http://tinyurl.com/daybreakbook>

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