



The August Purge of Joe Lieberman

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Until this week, Senator Joseph Lieberman was the most prominent representative of the Scoop Jackson wing of the Democratic Party. Now, that wing is down to its last few feathers.

On Tuesday night, Lieberman gave a classy concession speech – and then immediately launched a new campaign as an independent candidate. He has a fighting chance. Connecticut has more voters registered as independents than as Democrats. The breakdown: 850,000 unaffiliated, 675,000 Democrats and 430,000 Republicans. And among those Republicans are some who will prefer Lieberman to a lackluster GOP candidate – or to the prospect of a Lamont victory.

The August Purge of Joe Lieberman is not good for the Democratic Party. It is now, officially, a small tent party, not a mainstream party. Americans on Tuesday saw Ned

Lamont standing on the stage with Al Sharpton at one shoulder and Jesse Jackson hovering over the other. Neither Sharpton nor Jackson has ever won an election. One hopes neither ever will.

Spin it as he may, the central plank in Lamont's platform is that the U.S. accept complete and utter defeat at the hands of terrorists and insurgents in Iraq – and, by implication, before long, elsewhere too. It does not fool most of the people to say, as Lamont did, that he will bring the troops "home to a hero's welcome." In the real world, that is not what awaits those who suffer defeat -- however painful their wounds, however great their courage under fire.

The war we are fighting -- in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere -- is nasty and bloody and we are not doing very well. But this is what war is like in the 21st century. We

either learn to win such conflicts or we get used to getting whipped; maybe we even start to like getting whipped. Think of Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) bragging about the retreats he has favored in the past -- Beirut in 1983, Somalia in 1993 -- as though those retreats did not pave the way to 9/11/01.

What's worse is that Lamont and his supporters believe America deserves defeat -- for its sins, for its crimes, for its failures, for successes they think it doesn't deserve. They don't say it the way Ward Churchill does but you can read it between the lines.

They claim it will not be the U.S. that is defeated: Only George Bush and the hated neo-cons will be vanquished by the forces formerly led by Saddam Hussein and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. That is akin to a passenger on a ship saying that when the vessel sinks, only the captain and crew will drown.

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So this is a bad moment for America, too. There was a time when Americans united against their enemies. In this war, our enemies have been allowed to divide us. Bush deserves some blame for that. But disunity has been the goal of the Lamont/Sharpton/Jackson/Murtha/Dean/Soros/Sheehan/Moore/Kos wing of the Democratic Party, the wing that this week triumphed in Connecticut.

The enemy we face is a predator: If we run from him, he will pursue us. We can not appease this enemy. We can not make ourselves inoffensive to him.

Joe Lieberman understands that. Lieberman's fellow Democrats in Connecticut have punished him for his vision. Ned Lamont and his associates do not get it. For their ignorance, they have been rewarded, at least for now.