



THE BLOG

The Suicide Strategy (Not)

By Marty Kaplan

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Until a few minutes ago, the consensus advice to Democrats from the elite political class was this: Stick to the center. If you cater to your base in the primaries, it'll kill you in the general. If you run against torture, you will eat the Republicans' exhaust. If you're anti-Petraeus, you might as well be McGovern, and you'll be beaten just as badly. If you're soft on Iran, you might as well be Dukakis in a tank. If you want single-payer health insurance, you might as well be Mondale raising taxes. If you run against global warming, working people whose jobs depend on pollution will desert you in droves. Don't be shrill; Americans want to end the bickering. Change is good, but not radical change. Cautious boldness — that's the ticket.

What a difference a poll makes. I just heard NBC News political director, Chuck Todd, read the tea leaves of the new Rupert Murdoch/General Electric — oops, I mean *Wall Street Journal*/NBC — poll. Turns out that so many Americans are so pissed off at the current crop of policies and politicians and parties that, sez Todd, there may be an opening in '08 for a third party candidate— not a bipartisan prince of pabulum, but a non-whackball Ross Perot with a throw-the-bums out-message.

So say ta-ta to triangulation, Hillary. Scrap that pox-on-boomer-era-culture-wars, Barack. Candidates, if you want to connect with voters, take a page from the passion of Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul and John Edwards. Listen to the likes of Russ Feingold and Bernie Sanders and yes, Al Gore. All of a sudden, yesterday's suicide strategy is today's genius gambit. Who would've thunk it?

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