

Despite strong evidence to the contrary, it has become established conventional wisdom among mainstream Washington journalists that the “surge” was the singular reason for the recent decline in Iraq’s violence. It’s also agreed that McCain deserves great credit for pushing the “surge” idea early.

As we’ve reported previously, other brutal factors – that the Washington press corps almost never mentions – help explain the decline in violence:

--Vicious ethnic cleansing has succeeded in separating Sunnis and Shias to such a degree that there are fewer targets to kill. Several million Iraqis are estimated to be refugees either in neighboring countries or within their own.

--Concrete walls built between Sunni and Shia areas have made “death-squad” raids more difficult but also have “cantonized” much of Baghdad and other Iraqi cities, making everyday life for Iraqis even more exhausting as they seek food or travel to work.

--During the “surge,” U.S. forces expanded a policy of rounding up so-called “military age males” and locking up tens of thousands in prison.

--Awesome U.S. firepower, concentrated on insurgents and civilian bystanders for more than five years, has slaughtered countless thousands of Iraqis and has intimidated many others to look simply to their own survival.

--With the total Iraqi death toll estimated in the hundreds of thousands and many more Iraqis horribly maimed, the society has been deeply traumatized. As tyrants have learned throughout history, at some point violent repression does work.

But this dark side of the “successful surge” is excluded from the U.S. political debate. As during the pre-invasion period, the Washington press corps acts more like Bush’s propagandists than anything close to skeptical journalists.

The only time they get tough in interviews is with Obama, demanding that he get in line with the rest of Washington’s conventional wisdom and hail the media’s old favorite, John McCain, for his courage and wisdom.

In playing this role, the U.S. press is again playing into Bush’s hands and his desire to make sure that outright defeat in Iraq won’t occur on his watch – and that he will leave behind a successor who is committed to the neoconservative strategy of open-ended warfare against

militants.

[More...](#)