

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

Lawrence B. Goodheart

### The Past as Prologue

*How much more are we going to have to take?  
Fuchs and Acheson and Hiss and hydrogen  
bombs threatening outside and New Dealism  
eating away the vitals of the nation. In the  
name of heaven is this the best America can do?*

Homer Capehart,  
Republican Senator, Indiana<sup>1</sup>

The sense of alarm and outrage toward communism abroad and the welfare state at home expressed by Senator Capehart during the early years of the Cold War has uncanny parallels to the current situation in the United States. The deadly attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq remind us that the past is prologue to the present. Relentless American expansion in the half century after 1945 has been replete with irony, paradox, and contradiction. The brutal process of global domination, including control over critical economic markets, runs roughshod over longstanding ideals of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and international cooperation. With the pivotal election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980, the right wing instituted not only a renewed reaction against New Deal programs, but an effort to contain the social and cultural transformation of the 1960s and 1970s, including the momentous opposition to the Vietnam War. More recently, the traumatic violence of September 11 allowed the disputed election of 2000 to fade in public consciousness. With expedient dispatch and blatant distortion, the Bush administration used the al-Qaeda bombings to further its neo-liberal privatization of the economy and its neo-conservative bid for hegemony in the oil rich Middle East. The so-called war on terrorism has provided Orwellian justification for permanent war abroad and repression at home by a resurgent right wing.<sup>2</sup>

The argument of this essay is that the current challenge to America, as troubling and distinct as it may be in its own right, has antecedents. No

historical analogy is perfect; time and place differ. Nonetheless the emergence of the Cold War provides an archetype for the war on terrorism in several respects. First, policy planners, politicians, and the corporate media identified an external enemy. Not too long ago, Marxist-Leninism constituted what Reagan dubbed “the evil empire.” So too has the current confrontation been characterized, in Samuel Huntington’s phrase, “a war of civilizations,” a new crusade against Islam. Both justified a huge “military industrial complex” and aggressive intervention in other nations in the guise of promoting freedom. Second, authorities pointed to internal enemies - outright traitors or unwitting dupes - as a means to suppress dissent and promote mass consent. For example, zealots, such as those on the ill named House Committee on Un-American Activities, searched for subversives in what playwright Arthur Miller compared to a modern witch-hunt. Today the U.S. Patriot Act, duplicitously equating love of country with authoritarianism, builds on earlier anticommunist legislation in extensively restricting civil liberties and due process rights. Overall, this essay will focus on the influential role of Joseph McCarthy during the 1950s in creating a climate of belligerent nationalist fervor, an ominous legacy of war and repression that challenges America today.<sup>3</sup>

### **The External Enemy**

*The issue between the Republicans and the Democrats is clearly drawn. It has been deliberately drawn by those who have been in charge of twenty years of treason.*

Joseph McCarthy<sup>4</sup>

The victorious conclusion of World War II gave the illusion of United States’ omnipotence. Unlike the other Great Powers, the American homeland remained virtually unscathed by the ravages of war. The burgeoning economy was “the arsenal of democracy,” massive military spending and government planning ended the Great Depression. The armed forces triumphed against fascism in Europe and in Asia. With Hiroshima and Nagasaki in ruins, the United States had sole possession of atomic weapons. Henry Luce, the media mogul, heralded the advent of the “American century,” a new world order that neo-conservatives have recently re-invoked with the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

The course of postwar events, however, cast a serious pall on the illusion of United States’ invincibility. By the late 1940s, Eastern Europe was firmly fixed in the Soviet orbit, while the United States and Soviets

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

confronted one another in Berlin. America's former Russian ally had become a formidable rival with the Red Army at the ready along an Iron Curtain from the Baltic to the Adriatic. Aided by effective espionage, a resourceful Joseph Stalin in 1949 exploded an atomic bomb to the disbelief of the American public. Domestic instability and influential communist parties in Italy and France raised serious concern about the fate of Western Europe, America's most important trading partner. Communism swept over China, as Mao Zedong in 1949 drove Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists to the bastion of Taiwan. Guerrilla war in Indochina and the Philippines and full-scale combat in Korea portended that Asian nations might fall like dominoes to an international communist conspiracy based in the Kremlin. The assumption of a new American century was shaken to the core.<sup>6</sup>

During this tense period, there were a series of dramatic disclosures during 1948-1950 of subversion in the Department of State. Whittaker Chambers, a former communist, charged that Alger Hiss was a spy. Hiss had been a major advisor in 1945 to the ailing President Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference. The suggestion by politicians, such as Richard M. Nixon, was that his activities could be connected to "the fall of Eastern Europe" and "the loss of China." While Hiss was on trial and ultimately convicted, Secretary of State Dean Acheson voiced strong support for his colleague, which, for some, indicated complicity. Also in early 1950, the disclosure of espionage at the atomic research facility at Los Alamos, New Mexico, exposed Soviet agents, such as the British physicist Klaus Fuchs. President Harry Truman refused to pardon Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed in 1952 for these activities. Indeed, both parties enthusiastically embraced anti-communism. A bipartisan Congress in 1954, for example, amended the Pledge of Allegiance to include the phrase "under God" to contrast America's divine mission with the atheistic enemy.<sup>7</sup>

As the incumbent national party since 1933, the New Deal Democrats were, however, vulnerable to criticism. The lackluster Republicans had been wandering in the political wilderness for two decades after their laissez faire policies and big business pronouncements appeared linked more to massive unemployment than job creation. In contrast, the charismatic Franklin D. Roosevelt, experimenting with Keynesian economics, led the nation during an unprecedented four terms through the Great Depression and World War II. The post-war muddle, including labor unrest and economic problems, fell during Truman's tenure, providing the opportunity the Republicans needed. "The Hiss conviction," Nixon declared in 1950, "is good - a much needed start on the regulation and punishment of those who seek to betray their country." "Who are they?" he asked.<sup>8</sup> They were Democrats to be sure, with

Hiss caught in their midst. By charging their opponents with abetting twenty years of treason, Republicans found a means not only to regain the White House, but also to discredit the welfare state and to escalate Cold War tensions.

Joseph McCarthy, a Republican senator from Wisconsin, was the most sensational opponent of an international communist conspiracy during the Cold War. Aided and abetted by the leadership of his party, including Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, McCarthy railed against subversion and equated dissent with treason. A stocky, balding man, he intimidated the most powerful people with his pugnacious style and persistent badgering. An Irish Catholic from modest Mid-Western origins, he delighted in humbling sophisticated officials of the State Department with their Ivy League pedigrees and established Protestant backgrounds. With a specific ethnic and religious relish, he ridiculed the debonair Acheson as “the Red Dean of fashion.” He and his precocious aide Roy Cohn, a Jewish American, now redefined national identity. The litmus test was fervent anti-communism, which made the welfare state and internationalism of the New Deal appear suspect and wrongheaded. In contrast, the celebration of unfettered capitalism, nationalism, and traditional small town values wrapped the Republican Party in the flag. With unabashed self-promotion, McCarthy played on public fear to create a near hysteria about the Soviet threat and its domestic agents. McCarthy’s personal agenda nicely merged with the political effort of the Republican Party to regain national power.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Internal Enemy**

*I have here in my hand a list of two hundred and five [people] that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department.*

Joseph R. McCarthy<sup>10</sup>

In early 1950 in Wheeling, West Virginia, the burly ex-marine made his anticommunist debut with a speech from the heartland of America. The speech was direct, specific, alarming. His sensational style of accusation and expose was the stuff of tabloid headlines. Without sophistication or nuance, McCarthy set forth what was to become the grand narrative of the Cold War for the next forty years in mass culture, the Manichean struggle between good and evil. The theme of American messianism, the imperative of

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

manifest destiny, had legitimated the conquest of North America, including subjugation of indigenous peoples and repeated incursions into Latin America. Now American exceptionalism was the rationale for global confrontation with the Soviets. Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush have notably revived the McCarthy paradigm with the neoconservative doctrine of unilateralism, preventive war, and regime change.<sup>11</sup>

With the ruse of ever changing numbers, McCarthy measured the inexplicable decline in American might since 1945. At the end of the Second World War, the United States was “the most powerful military force the world had ever assembled.” The communists controlled only one person for every nine in the free world, but five years later this ratio had been reversed eight-to-five for “the Communist, atheistic world.” The “free world” had lost “a 100 million people to Communism a year.” The barbarians were at the gates. “We see,” McCarthy warned, “this country losing on every front.” Pointing at the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, he bemoaned, “Something is radically wrong with this nation today.”<sup>12</sup>

With frequent reference to allusive documents, McCarthy identified 205 communists in the State Department who had sabotaged foreign policy. Post-war “impotence,” he charged in a flourish of machismo, was “because of the traitorous actions of those who have been so well treated by this nation.” “The bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths,” who possessed “the finest clothes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government,” have “been selling the nation out.” New Deal intellectuals, such as Acheson and Hiss, whom McCarthy regarded as snobs from the northeastern elite, had allowed the State Department to become “thoroughly infested with Communists.” Playing on populist prejudices, McCarthy cried treason.<sup>13</sup>

On February 11, 1950, the junior senator challenged the president in a public telegram. He now had in his possession “the names of 57 Communists in the State Department,” and he concluded that “the failure to discharge these disloyal elements label the Democratic party . . . the bedfellow of international Communism.” During a six-hour speech on February 20, he outlined eighty-one security risks in the State Department. One was “a notorious homosexual” who frequented “the men’s room at Lafayette Park in Washington” for assignations. At a time of extreme homophobia, McCarthy’s slightly veiled innuendo linked sexual deviancy with effete liberals. The opposition to gay rights, most recently the proposed amendment to the Constitution to ban same sex marriage, has been an important cultural issue attracting the religious vote to the Republican Party, champion of “family values.” McCarthy also charged that a member of Truman’s cabinet secured

an important United Nations position for “a notorious international Communist.” World government has long been an anathema for nationalists. Roosevelt’s endorsement of the United Nations made that organization all the more suspect to Republicans. More recently, the opposition of the Security Council to the Bush administration’s unprovoked invasion of Iraq in 2003, and Secretary General Kofi Annan’s assessment that the war was illegal, are held loudly in contempt by ideologues such as Richard Perle, William Safire, John Bolton, and Douglas Fieth.<sup>14</sup>

Nor did McCarthy abide criticism. Rebuffed by the Senate committee chaired by Senator Millard Tydings, Democrat of Maryland, that investigated the allegations, McCarthy countered that a cover-up had occurred. He complained to Truman that the State Department files had been “stripped” of incriminating information that would have proven “the extent that this nation was and is betrayed.” “A crew of eight,” he asserted, had worked six months to purge evidence of the “disloyal, the bad security risks, the fellow travelers, and the traitors.” He vowed that whoever altered the files “must be found.” McCarthy denounced the acting security officer at the State Department as “completely incompetent to hold his job.” He added that an “associate and collaborator with Communists” was allowed free access to the file room at night. He reasserted that the State Department harbored a “group of Communists, fellow travelers, dupes” who had “either permitted or planned disaster to America in both East and West.” McCarthy not only refused to be silenced by the committee, but he took credit for Tydings’ failed bid for re-election to the Senate in 1952, adding to his mystique.<sup>15</sup>

The encouragement of his party and the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 spurred McCarthy to forge ahead. The highest officials in the Democratic administration, he charged, “went along with Stalin in Poland” and “went along 100% with him in Asia.” Alger Hiss, Dean Acheson, Owen Lattimore and George C. Marshall had undermined American power and facilitated Soviet dominance. Hiss was “representative of a group in the State Department” who “sold out the nation.” His betrayal at the Yalta Conference was a “story of high treason” that had led to the “fall of Eastern Europe,” “loss of China,” and Korean War.<sup>16</sup>

With time, the conspiracy grew. “Acheson’s aid to international Communism over twenty years,” McCarthy explained, was part of a “world strategy to create a Red China and a Red Poland.” “This pompous diplomat in striped pants with a phony British accent” had sabotaged the Nationalists and let China fall without letting the “American people know we pushed her.” He traced American reverses in the Korean War to “the great Red

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

Dean” and the “lace handkerchief crowd who by “double dealing” created a “blueprint for disaster.”<sup>17</sup>

Joining Acheson and Hiss in the “crimson crowd” at the State Department was Owen Lattimore. McCarthy accused the former professor with being “Alger Hiss’s boss in the espionage ring in the State Department” and being “the top Russian espionage agent in this country.” Even the sterling career of George C. Marshall, former chief of staff of the army and secretary of state, was suspect. “General Marshall’s decisions paralleled the interests of the Kremlin,” McCarthy revealed. Furthermore, in “a government of, by, and for Communists, crooks, and cronies,” Truman was “only dimly aware of what [was] going on.” The dire post war situation “must be the product of a great conspiracy, a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man.” The object of the grand intrigue was, McCarthy warned, “to impair our will to resist evil,” so the United States would “fall victim to Soviet intrigue from within and Russian military might from without.”<sup>18</sup>

After assuming the chairmanship of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in 1953 in a Republican Congress, McCarthy broadened his probe. He identified 30,000 publications by communist authors in State Department information centers, and he found that “left-wing slanting” had turned the voice of America into a “voice of international Communism.” “Great numbers of Communists” infiltrated defense plants, while “notorious Communists” duped an “incompetent” Army intelligence agency. He denounced an Army dentist, Major Irving Peress, as an “active member of the Communist conspiracy,” whose dental office was a “staging point” for espionage. Defying the Pentagon and outraging President Dwight D. Eisenhower, McCarthy charged, “We have secret masters in the military covering up, covering up, covering up for Communists.”<sup>19</sup>

### The Arrogance of Power

*Senator McCarthy . . . you better go to a psychiatrist.*  
Senator Stuart Symington,  
Democrat from Missouri<sup>20</sup>

The Cold War heightened political tensions that McCarthy exploited with an audacity that has been unsurpassed on the national level in the last fifty years. Arrogance was the source of his power, but also the cause of his downfall. Today’s master political operatives, such as Lee Atwater and his protégé Karl Rove, are ruthless, but with a subtlety and indirection that was

alien to McCarthy. Atwater's Willie Horton television advertisement in 1988 associated presidential candidate Michael Dukakis with leniency to a violent African American felon, much as a Democratic commercial in the 1964 campaign linked conservative Barry Goldwater to nuclear war. And Rove's orchestration of attacks on Jim Hightower and Anne Richardson in Texas, John McCain in South Carolina, and on John Kerry's Vietnam War record during the 2004 campaign cleverly kept him and George W. Bush behind the scenes, like the Wizard of Oz. McCarthy, on the other hand, made his charges personally, openly, defiantly.<sup>21</sup>

McCarthy also exhibited a raw, masculine aggression that threatened at a moment to turn into actual physical violence. During the confrontational Army-McCarthy hearings, an exasperated Stuart Symington recommended that he consult a psychiatrist. The cult of rugged manhood still gets ample display among tough talking politicians. Ronald Reagan's Hollywood celebration of Rambo and Star Wars, George W. Bush's Texas barroom swagger of "Bring them on" in challenge to Muslim militants, and Arnold Schwarzenegger's schoolyard bullying of "girly men" have an artful theatricality and contrived calculation. McCarthy, however, displayed an aura of irrational danger and spontaneous belligerency, something akin to the violence of troubled boxer Mike Tyson. For example, he threatened to "make a good American" out of liberal Democrat Adlai Stevenson with a "slippery elm club." In Senate hearings, he warned a recalcitrant Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens, that he was "going to kick the brains out of anyone who protects Communists." And for newsman Drew Pearson, "the disguised sugar-coated voice of Russia," McCarthy promised a "bare-knuckled job."<sup>22</sup>

McCarthy's public persona had ancestral intimations of Paddy, the stereotype of the uncouth and irascible Irish immigrant. Eisenhower, a moderate Republican, refused to "get in the gutter with that guy." As the journalist Richard Rovere noted, McCarthy was the "master of the scabrous and scatological." Herbert Block, the editorial cartoonist, typically portrayed a begrimed McCarthy emerging from a sewer with a paintbrush and "smear" bucket. McCarthy's mudslinging and barnyard rhetoric were crude, an affirmation of rural roots. One example may suffice. In a joke McCarthy liked to tell, he described how he might "clean out the State Department." When Saint Peter barred Acheson's entry into heaven, the heavenly host directed him to another route that caused him to fall into a vast cesspool up to the neck. Seeing Lattimore nearby, he called out, "We're sure in trouble!" Lattimore replied, "This is nothing. Wait until Joe comes through in his speedboat." The consummate outsider, McCarthy reveled in causing trouble. The strident style, character assassination, and vulgar sensibility that he

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

personified have now been institutionalized in the shouting and scandal of talk radio and cable television, the tabloid news that attracts many Americans.<sup>23</sup>

The charge that critics were acting like communists was McCarthy's hallmark. The labeling of opponents as un-American dates to the heated acrimony between Federalists and Republicans during the new republic. McCarthy, however, was distinctive in employing the tactic incessantly during the early Cold War. In 1951 Democratic Senator William Benton accused McCarthy with conduct unbecoming a senator. McCarthy retorted that the goals of Benton and the Communist party were the same, either "knowingly or through stupidity." In order to discredit the opposition of Tydings, McCarthy disseminated a doctored photograph showing the senator and prominent communist Earl Browder together, not unlike the altered picture during the 2004 campaign that depicted Jane Fonda and John Kerry side-by-side in a Vietnam protest. Confronted with the spurious nature of the photograph, the unrepentant McCarthy maintained that the main point remained true - Tydings was "the symbol of whitewash and cover-up of people dangerous to this country." During the vituperation that marked the Army-McCarthy hearings, McCarthy termed Symington's comments as "the most unfounded smear," which "was the same thing that the Communist party has been doing too long."<sup>24</sup>

Another emotional incident during the Army-McCarthy hearings demonstrates the extreme to which McCarthy's identification of critics with communism could take. McCarthy had agreed to an understanding between Cohn, counsel for the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and Joseph Welch, spokesman for the Army. The affiliation of Fred Fisher, a young attorney in Welch's law firm, with an allegedly communist front organization would not be mentioned. In turn, Cohn's questionable draft record was off limits. Irritated with Welch's probing questions during the hearings, McCarthy exploded in anger. Breaking the agreement, he denounced Fisher as a former member of "the legal bulwark of the Communist party." Welch seized the moment of character assassination to disgrace McCarthy. "Have you left no sense of decency?" he pleaded before a national television audience. As a recess was quickly declared, McCarthy raised his hands in mock innocence. Welch had turned the tables on the grand inquisitor.<sup>25</sup>

With the end of the Korean War and Eisenhower in the presidency, McCarthy's cries of communist conspiracy in the upper echelons of the army became a nightmare for his party. In late 1954, celebrated attorney Edward Bennet Williams managed to silence his client's polemics during the actual

censure procedure in the Senate. Outside the hearing room, McCarthy felt free, however, to announce that “the Communist party - a relatively small group of deadly conspirators - had made a committee of the Senate its unwitting handmaiden.” On the December day that his colleagues rebuked him by a vote of 67 to 22, McCarthy snapped at the chairman of the committee, Arthur Watkins, “How is the little coward from Utah?” Stripped of authority, McCarthy faded into obscurity and died in 1957 of chronic alcoholism.<sup>26</sup>

### **An Ominous Legacy**

*No one can terrorize a whole nation, unless we are all his accomplices.*

Edward R. Murrow,  
Journalist<sup>27</sup>

McCarthy left an ominous legacy for America today. During the early Cold War, frustration in establishing the American century led to confrontation with the Soviet Union on many fronts. This formerly undistinguished senator gained national prominence from a personal crusade against what Americans widely accepted as an international communist conspiracy. In the United States, his attacks on the wellborn, the well educated, and the well placed attracted populist support for this descendant of Catholic immigrants. A bipartisan Cold War consensus allowed a demagogue to fuel anti-communism with class, religious, and ethnic resentment. With his Jewish colleague Cohn, they equated Americanism with fervent anti-communism. In early 1954 polls showed that 60 percent of Americans with an opinion on McCarthy approved of his activities. He was the first major politician to use television, particularly for press conferences and investigations, to build a following. Uncanny and unpredictable, McCarthy intimidated many, including Eisenhower who refused to confront him. In turn, liberal Democrats, such as Truman and Senator Humbert Humphrey, sponsored loyalty oaths and endorsed anti-subversive legislation to affirm their patriotism. No public official wanted to be “soft” on communism. McCarthy helped to make the 1952 presidential election a referendum on what he charged were twenty years of Democratic treason and New Deal socialism. Only by late 1954, with his crusade at cross currents with his party, did the Senate, as journalist Edward R. Murrow urged, censor its most outrageous member.

After September 11, the extremely aggressive attempt by the Bush administration to expand American hegemony, especially in the Middle East and Central Asia, revives much of the McCarthyite tradition. Not unlike the

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

battle against the international communist conspiracy, the ill-defined war on terrorism focuses on an alien, amorphous antagonist. As Gillo Pontecorvo's remarkable movie *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) makes clear, terrorism (deadly attacks on noncombatant civilians) is a tactic toward a goal (national liberation), not an end in itself. In the current struggle, the purpose, let alone identity, of the external enemy remains vague. Elusive and evil, the external enemy exists everywhere. Is it the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the PLO and Hamas, Saddam Hussein and Ahmed Chalabi, Sunni and Shiite militants, Arabs or Islam itself? From a remote mountain lair Osama Bin Laden apparently directs nefarious agents that may lurk in any neighborhood. What do they want? Why don't they like us? The so-called war on terrorism with its color-coded alerts keeps people fearful and rallies them around the flag in a blind nationalism reminiscent of the Cold War.<sup>28</sup>

With the public beguiled by the jingoism of the corporate media, including the *New York Times*, neo-conservatives used the rationale of the September 11 attacks to implement a new Pax Americana. Unlike the traditional isolationism of a Pat Buchanan, neo-conservatives advocate unilateral intervention and preventive war in complete disregard of the U. S. Constitution, United Nations, and international law. It is nothing more than the crude doctrine of might makes right. With Machiavellian machination, the Bush administration publicly justified the invasion of Iraq in 2003, because Saddam had weapons of mass destruction at the ready, and he was allied with Bin Laden. Neither was true. In reality, as counter-terrorist official Richard Clarke has made clear, the Bush administration, especially national security advisor Condoleeza Rice, ignored repeated warnings before September 11 that al-Qaeda was poised to attack in the United States.<sup>29</sup>

As McCarthy showed, the public can be misled in times of crisis. The mentor of neo-conservatives, Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago, explained, as Plato had in *The Republic*, that the state must legitimate itself to the masses in terms of a worthy, grand lie. As the Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels said, tell a big lie, keep repeating it, and people will believe it. Even as late as the 2004 campaign, Vice President Richard Cheney duplicitously charged that Saddam had the weapons of mass destruction and was responsible for the heinous bombings in Manhattan. Bush glibly states that the war on terror is a crusade for freedom, the theme of his second inaugural address. Polls show that much of the public still believes these deceptions.<sup>30</sup>

The actual agenda of the neo-conservatives in the Middle East is threefold: to secure the vast oil reserves for U.S. corporations, to remove the Arab foes of Israel, and to establish United States dominance in the region.

Civilian leadership in the Department of Defense, notably Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, planned to overcome the so-called Vietnam syndrome with a splendid, short war. Using overwhelming American military superiority, a relatively small force of 150,000 ground troops would oust the regime and with the grateful support of the people establish a client state. The dominoes of democracy, it was believed, would quickly fall on Baathist Syria and Shiite Iran as well as their ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, inveterate foes of Israel. Confronted with a new United States' balance of power, the Palestinians would have to reach an accommodation with Israel. Given the close collaboration between the United States and Israel, the largest recipient of American foreign aid in the world, the Likud might well be expected to expand the Jewish state into the West Bank and take control of Jerusalem. According to neo-conservative dogma, America would usher in a new world order.<sup>31</sup>

Instead, the invasion of Iraq is a catastrophe. Since Bush, costumed as a fighter pilot, announced in May 2003 that the mission was accomplished, guerrilla warfare and national resistance to the occupation have emerged throughout Iraq. Civilian casualties climb, as do those of the would-be conquerors. Systematic torture of prisoners by brutal American personnel, revealed in graphic photographs at Abu Ghraib prison, was the outcome of decisions at the highest level of government, including now Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, to disregard international law. In addition, the invasion of Iraq sidelined the fragile situation in war-ravaged Afghanistan, where warlords and the Taliban threaten the present regime. Neo-conservative policies have made the world, not safer, but far more dangerous. Fear of the internal enemy has led to surveillance of Arab Americans, harassment of dissenters, and a variety of restrictions on civil liberties codified in the Patriot Act. Adding to the alarm, Cheney stated that if John Kerry was elected president, "we'll get hit again," a reference to the September 11 attacks. As Senator Edward Kennedy aptly remarked, the imperial adventure in Iraq has been "a toxic mix of ignorance, arrogance and stubborn ideology," a description that might well describe Joseph McCarthy and the anticommunist crusade fifty years ago.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After: America, 1955-1960* (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 137.

<sup>2</sup> See Harry Magdoff, *Age of Imperialism: The Economics of U. S. Foreign Policy* (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1969); Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib,*

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

---

and the War on Terror (N.Y.: New York Review Books, 2004); Rashid Khalide, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon, 2004); Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (London: Verso, 2004); and Stephen Kinzer, *Regime Change: Why Americans Overthrew 15 Governments from Hawaii to Iraq*, forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1996); and Arthur Miller, *Crucible, A Play in Four Acts* (N.Y.: Viking, 1953).

<sup>4</sup> Speech, Charlestown, West Virginia, 4 February 1954.

<sup>5</sup> Henry R. Luce, *American Century* (N.Y.: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, *On Every Front: The Making of the Cold War* (N.Y.: Norton, 1979) and *Meeting the Communist Threat: Truman to Reagan* (N.Y.: Oxford, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Allen Weinstein, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 96 (26 Jan. 1950), 1008.

<sup>9</sup> Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1959); and Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (N.Y.: Oxford, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Speech, Wheeling, West Virginia, 9 February 1950.

<sup>11</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Cleveland: World, 1961) and *Empire as a Way of Life* (N.Y.: Oxford, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 96 (20 Feb. 1950), 1954; *idem*, 96 (23 Sept. 1950), A6899; and "The McCarthy Issue," *U.S. News and World Report*, 7 Sept. 1951, 31.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 96 (20 Feb. 1950), 1957.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; "Telegram from McCarthy to Truman," Box 7157, File No.3371, 11 Feb. 1950, Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; and Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joseph McCarthy* (N.Y.: Harper, Brace, 1959), 128-9.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 96 (20 Feb. 1950), 1952-6; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 82<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 97 (20 Aug. 1951), 10334; "Correspondence from McCarthy to Truman," Box 108, File No. 20, 12 July 1950, Truman Library; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *State Department File Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 8-10, 21, 27, 38-39, 43, 104; U.S. Congress, Senate, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *State Department Employee Loyalty Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950), 140; and Allen J. Matusow, ed., *Joseph R. McCarthy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 46.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 96 (20 Feb. 1950), 1957; and Matusow, *McCarthy*, 47.

---

<sup>17</sup> Joseph R. McCarthy, *McCarthyism: The Fight for America* (N.Y.: Devin-Adair, 1952), 23-51; and Matusow, *McCarthy*, 46-51.

<sup>18</sup> McCarthy, *McCarthyism*, 57-70; Owen Lattimore *Ordeal by Slander* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950), 31, 34; Joseph R. McCarthy, *America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall* (N.Y.: Devon-Adair, 1952), 168-171; U.S. Congress, Senate, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, *State Department Employee Loyalty Investigation* (Washington; Government Printing Office, 1950), 92, 278, 280, 284-6. "McCarthy to All Members of the Senate and House," Box 1401, File No. 584, 11 June 1951, Truman Library; and "McCarthy Sees Plot; He Will Attack Marshall," *N.Y. Times*, 13 June 1951.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *State Department File Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 110; Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *State Department Information Program - Voice of America* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 110; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Security - United Nations* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 4-5, 34-5, 43, 50; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Communist Infiltration among Army Civilian Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 2-3, 52; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Communist Infiltration into the Army* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 21-22, 25-26, 34-37, 42; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Subversion and Espionage in Defense Establishments and Industry* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 6, 46, 60-61, 82-88, 205, 287-8, 306; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, *Army - McCarthy Hearings* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 9, 900, 2388, 2404-5; and "Transcript of NBC Meet the Press," Box 2004, Central Files: Alpha, 13 Dec. 1953, pp. 7-10, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

<sup>20</sup> *Army- McCarthy Hearings*, 2284.

<sup>21</sup> James Moore and Wayne Slater, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential* (N.Y.: Wiley, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> For examples of McCarthy's threats of personal violence, see: U.S. Congress, Senate, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Malmedy Massacre Investigation* (Washington: D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), 782; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 95 (26 July 1949), 10161-2; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, (6 (23 Sept. 1950), A7249; James Rorty and Moshe Decter, *McCarthy and the Communists* (Boston: Beacon, 1954), 61-2; "Hensel Declares McCarthy Sought to Kill Charges" *N.Y. Times*, 21 June 1954, 1; and U.S. Congress, Senate 83<sup>d</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, *Army McCarthy Hearings* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 2155, 2561; and Matusow, *McCarthy*, 51-4. For movie documentaries, see *Point of Order* (1964) and *Charge and Counterchange: A Film of the Era of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy* (1968) - both by Emile de Antonio.

## The Ominous Legacy of Joseph McCarthy for America Today

---

<sup>23</sup> Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (N.Y.: Harper, 1956), 249; Rovere, *McCarthy*, 48-9; Herbert Block, *The Herblock Book* (Boston: Beacon, 1952); and Roy Cohn, *McCarthy* (N.Y.: New American Library, 1968), 269.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 82d Congress, 1st Session, 97 (20 Aug. 1951), 10334; U.S. Congress, Senate, 83d Congress 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, *Army-McCarthy Hearings*, 2284, 2707.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, 83d Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, *Army McCarthy Hearing*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 2425-30; Cohn, *McCarthy*, 200-11; Michael Straight, *Trial by Television* (Boston: Beacon, 1954), 253; and Robert Griffen, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 259-60.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 83d Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 100(10 Nov. 1954), 15948-54; Edward Bennet Williams, *One Man's Freedom* (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1962), 62-3; and Arthur Watkins, *Enough Rope* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 182.

<sup>27</sup> *See It Now*, CBS Television, 7 March 1954.

<sup>28</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (N.Y.: Metropolitan, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Scott Ritter, *Frontier Justice: Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Bushwacking of America* (N.Y.: Context Books, 2003); Michael Massing, *Now They Tell Us: The American Press and Iraq* (N.Y.: New York Review Books, 2004); Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (N.Y.: Free Press, 2004); and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *War and the American Presidency* (N.Y. Norton, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and James Bamford, *A Pretext for War: 9/11, Iraq, and the Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (N.Y.: Vintage, 1964); Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *American Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Stephen Pelletiere, *America's Oil Wars* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004);

<sup>32</sup> Joel Bleifuss, "Duck and Cover-Up," *In These Times*, 11 Oct. 2004, 3; Michael Janofsky, "Kennedy Denounces Bush Policies as Endangering the World," *N.Y. Times*, 28 Sept. 2004, A18; Emmanuel Todd, *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2004); John Newhouse, *Imperial America: The Bush Assault on the World Order* (N.Y.: Vintage, 2004); Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (N.Y.: Harper Collins, 2004); Mark Danner, "Abu Ghraib: The Hidden Story," *New York Review of Books*, 7 Oct. 2004, 44-50; and Stanley Hoffman, "Out of Iraq," *New York Review of Books*, 21 Oct. 2004, 4-7.