

Not Your Average Joe:

Senator McCarthy's Fight Against the Presidency 1946-1957

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Abstract

Senator Joe McCarthy from Wisconsin has become synonymous with fear mongering and red baiting in American political history due to his public fight against Communism during the 1950s. Many supported his cause but there were also many in office who did not agree with his methods or his style. Regardless of how he went about his hunt, McCarthy had a large impact on his fellow politicians in all levels of the federal government. He served as an object for many politicians to use to contrast their positions and personality with. This gave McCarthy an above average influence on policy making and governance compared to the standard senator at the time. Other historians have written about McCarthy and his interactions with the big players of this generation, but few have tied them all together and examined the true feeling of the men he battled. This paper will focus on McCarthy's involvement with the Truman and Eisenhower administrations in terms of foreign policy, electoral politics, and governance through the examination of personal letters, memoirs, newspapers, and biographical texts. McCarthy's influence with Truman and Eisenhower showed that his partisan brand of politics ended up uniting the two parties against him, something that is rare in contemporary American politics.

Section 1: Perspective

The history of the United States of America is littered with its share of polarizing figures. They come from all backgrounds such as the military, like Benedict Arnold, to presidential, like President Richard M. Nixon, but few are quite as vilified today as Senator Joseph McCarthy. When the nation was facing a new opponent in the Soviet Union, the junior senator from Wisconsin exploited the new enemy to launch his career. To do this, he started a movement that today bears his namesake: McCarthyism. Back in the late 1940's and early 1950's it went by anti-Communism or patriotism if you had asked McCarthy or his political allies. McCarthy's movement grew so big that it began to sweep aside other prominent social movements of the time, which is part of the reason the Civil Rights movement took hold more publically in the 1960's rather than during the McCarthy-Eisenhower era.¹

Joe McCarthy won his first election in 1939 when he defeated an incumbent judge for the seat on the Tenth Judicial Circuit in Wisconsin.² From there he expanded his political connections and assembled a close group of advisers, including Urban Van Susteren (father of former Fox News host Greta Van Susteren), who eventually urged him to consider running for a larger and more prestigious office. He of course needed to raise his profile to win such an office and at the time there was no better way than to enter the military and fight in World War II. He entered into the Marine Corps as a Lieutenant and quickly worked his way up to the rank of Captain where he served as an intelligence debriefer and occasionally accompanied flight crews on reconnaissance missions in order to see some action, as he put it.³ When he returned stateside he used his position in the air to craft the persona of Tail-Gunner Joe, a war hero, who fought for

¹ Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 220.

² Michael O'Brien, *McCarthy and McCarthyism in Wisconsin* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980), 30-31.

³ O'Brien 42-51.

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the common man. He had taken the first step in getting his name out across Wisconsin as a man who was on the people's side and was willing to fight for the good of the state and country.

He worked his way across the state raising his profile before announcing his intention to run against Robert LaFollette Jr. in the Republican United States Senate Primary in 1946.⁴ He defeated the incumbent senator and went on to defeat the Democratic contender Howard McMurray by a sizeable margin in the general election.⁵ McCarthy's first few years in Congress were fairly mundane with the junior senator generally towing the Republican Party line in terms of voting and policy, but that all changed on February 10th, 1950. There in Wheeling West Virginia, McCarthy announced to a group of women at a local Lincoln Day dinner that he had a list of 205 known Communists currently working within the State Department of the United States.⁶

As the Cold War escalated, the nation became fixated with McCarthy's accusation and his popularity skyrocketed overnight. He became the public face of the anti-Communism movement and at times the Republican Party. He was thus a man who wielded great influence, more often for worse than for better. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower dealt with the McCarthy thorn during their time in office; he often forced the two to shift their domestic and foreign policy in response to McCarthy's divisive rhetoric. Even after his death, McCarthy and his movement still lingered in the memory of those in office and stood as a reminder that mass hysteria was not going anywhere and could flare up again at any given moment. The examination of personal letters, memoirs, and books show that Senator Joe McCarthy was a lightning rod for

⁴ Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2000), 38-39.

⁵ O'Brien 80.

⁶ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 241.

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American politics during his time in office. In other words he attracted all the attention in the media and in order to counter that attention, other politicians had to join him or rebuke him.

While many in Congress chose to join or ignore him, presidents did not have that luxury since they were so often the target of his attacks. McCarthy attacked many aspects of both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, but the focus of the paper will be on his election influence, his fighting of cabinet and diplomatic nominations, and his moves to, in general, undermine the confidence of their advisors. It will also examine McCarthy's influence on foreign policy moves like European reconstruction and Communism containment. The primary sources on those topics show that McCarthy had a greater than average impact on two presidencies that ended up transcending partisan politics, McCarthy's favored style.

Literature Review

With Senator McCarthy playing such a large part in defining both the political and social culture during the 1950's, many historians have examined various aspects of his life. These authors have taken positions both pro and anti-McCarthy with a few even occupying the middle ground. These historians come at the issue of McCarthy and McCarthyism from many angles including but not limited to: his influence on pop culture, his campaign work, his influence on the religious community, his influence within the Republican Party to name a few. This paper will focus largely on McCarthy's relationship with politicians of his era as well as the larger implications of the movement bearing his namesake.

Joe McCarthy's influence touched many aspects of American culture and political thought during his time in office. Ellen Schrecker, who is a professor of history at Yeshiva University in New York, is perhaps one of the most well-known modern proponents of the

negative influence of Senator Joe McCarthy. She covers his movement as a whole in her book *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* and looks at the effect the senator's trials had on the country and the specific people he targeted. She opens her book with a detailed history of the Communist Party within the United States and tries to debunk McCarthy's claim that there were active spies within our borders. In other words she covers the ideas behind McCarthyism as a whole. This book differs from the others in that she tends to view McCarthy in a strictly negative view instead of providing an objective study. The book also focuses more on the victims of McCarthy, rather than the man himself, which is how the book becomes useful for this paper.

She makes an compelling argument that McCarthy did not need to destroy the Communist Party because it would have eventually destroyed itself through its lack of democracy, support for the Soviet Union, and other failings of the general party structure.⁷ She also provides enough details to suggest that the party could have been an actual threat to the country, however only during the first Red Scare which occurred between 1919 and 1920. Compared with the other works examined in this paper, Schrecker does not spend a large amount of the book on Senator McCarthy explicitly. Instead she focuses on the US Communist Party, and the different organizations and political figures that engaged in anti-Communism.

Her first detailed mention of Senator McCarthy's election to the Senate in 1946 comes in the seventh chapter. Here she attacks McCarthy for his strategies of anti-Communism which according to her were up for historical debate. Like many recent historians she does not place McCarthy's election in the context of the state of Wisconsin which is important to do when looking at the reasons behind his behaviors and political grandstanding. Schrecker writes that McCarthy merely won in the "Republican sweep of 1946" without apparently looking at the

⁷ Schrecker, 19, 23, 41.

history of his opponent, Robert LaFollette Jr., and the greater failings of his campaign strategy.⁸ She closes out her book by looking at the lives of those blacklisted by the senator and the long lasting effects of the McCarthy era on American politics, which is where this work becomes extremely useful for the arguments proposed in this capstone.

After discussing the greater influence of McCarthy/McCarthyism on the societal fabric of the United States, the more specific examples of said influence are open for further inspection. One of these areas in European reconstruction post World War II, more specifically the Marshall Plan. In his work *The American Ascendancy* Michael H. Hunt describes the plan among many other pieces of history which allowed the United States to grow into a superpower that wielded global dominance. Hunt's main argument in this work is that through wealth, national confidence, and a strong modern state, the United States was able to transform itself from a tiny former colony into the world's most powerful country in a mere 200+years.⁹ He discusses the growth of each of the above mentioned categories from the very founding of the country in 1776 to the modern day under the Bush administration.

More specifically he divides his work into 8 distinct sections, each focusing on a different era. The sections are: nineteenth century foundations, grand projects, the American way in a fragmenting world, reaching for geopolitical dominance, in the American image, the third world challenge, disoriented giant, and the neoliberal triumph. These sections discuss roughly 30 years of American history that cover politics, culture, economics, and foreign relations.

In terms of this project, Hunt's work provides an excellent frame of reference for McCarthy in the larger Cold War era. He also discusses many of the events of the time in which McCarthy was heavily involved thus providing a good source of background information on

⁸ Schrecker, 241.

⁹ Hunt, 2.

topics such as the Marshall Plan. Unfortunately, Hunt's book does not discuss very many people and their importance, but rather their ideas that have made an impact, which can be frustrating for those who are unaware of many lesser known figures. In comparison to the work by Schrecker who covers McCarthyism as a whole, Hunt changes the focus and is now covering policy as a whole, which again is very helpful in establishing a jumping off point for any number of policy issues that McCarthy is involved in.

Another source that provides excellent background on the Marshall Plan and European Reconstruction is A.A. Berle Jr.'s article *The Marshall Plan in the European Struggle*. This article explains what the Marshall Plan is before giving some history on why the plan was needed and how it was rolled out. He also discusses the role of the Soviet Union in controlling the rebuilding of Europe as well, which is a sharp contrast to the United States who wanted Europe to essentially rebuild itself with US money.

The actual argument that Berle is making is that the United States and the Marshall Plan caused the tension with the Soviet Union in the first place which led to a colder form of war in both Europe and worldwide and that the plan was not well thought out. An example of this would be his interpretation of the speech Marshall gave in June of 1947, which many view as the outline for his plan, but Berle views as just a collection of vague hopes.¹⁰ This argument is not particularly relevant to this paper since this is not a paper arguing the merits of the Marshall Plan. What is of use is the background information on the plan itself which will serve to help readers understand why McCarthy may have had such a big influence on policy regarding Europe.

¹⁰ A.A. Berle Jr., "The Marshall Plan and the European Struggle," *Social Research* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 199-218. Accessed October 20, 2017. <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uwec.edu/docview/1778374862/fulltextPDF/64501BBECE384BD5PQ/1?accountid=14790>

The article is fairly different than the other sources used in this paper because it is just that: an article. Berle makes a clear anti-foreign policy argument against the United States and he does not talk about any person in particular. He instead focuses on nations as the main players in history, which help to better frame his argument. He also has some similarities with other authors on this list such as Ellen Schrecker who share his sort of negative view points on US policy during this era.

After looking at the specific issues McCarthy was involved in, it is important to consider the people who worked with McCarthy and had regular interactions with him on those issues. One of these men is Richard Nixon, who is the subject of Stephen Ambrose's three part work titled *Nixon*. This work covers the complete life of former president from birth till death with everything in between. The volume that will be examined in this paper is volume one, which covers his birth in 1913 through his time as a congressman, senator, vice president and regular citizen.

Ambrose begins describing the early Nixon family history by looking at his parents Frank and Hannah and how they came to end up in California before moving on to Nixon's early life.¹¹ He then goes on to look at Nixon's time in college, the military during World War II, and his budding career in politics which includes his work against Alger Hiss. He ends the work with a glimpse of Nixon's mentality after losing the presidential race with Senator Kennedy and how he began to adjust to life as a private citizen for the first time in nearly 20 years.

Ambrose covers Nixon in a very detached way and does not offer many opinions on a person who is so often an object of harsh criticism if not ridicule. He does not offer any argument on the life and decisions of the man, instead choosing to simply tell the stories

¹¹ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: Volume 1-The Education of a Politician 1913-1962* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 9.

associated with his life and let his readers make up their own minds. His work and style are especially helpful for this paper because Nixon is not the focus; Senator McCarthy is, so by eliminating the bias of many anti-Nixon works, one can focus on the interactions between the two. This book also covers many interactions that other sources do not, including Nixon's frequent predilections of McCarthy's actions, their campaign contributions from Senator Kennedy, Nixon's actions against extremism, HUAC, Alger Hiss, the Marshall Plan, their later friendship, and many others.¹² It differs from the other sources on this list because it focuses on the life of one man, instead of one idea fleshed out from beginning to end; however, it provides excellent insights on both Nixon and McCarthy.

The next work, *Truman*, comes from acclaimed author David McCullough and is a biography on the 33rd president of the United States. This work contrasts with Michael O'Brien's work in that it deals mostly with the life of President Truman. There are many sections that relate to McCarthy, which is why it's important to this research, but he is not the focus. The book contains six parts, with each section focusing on an aspect on Truman's life. The first deals with his early life; the second focuses on his days as a senator; the third examines his transition from vice president to president following the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt; the fourth looks at his time in the high office out of the shadow of Roosevelt; the fifth section revolves around the heavier decisions during his time in office such as his role with the military; and finally the sixth section is about his time as a private citizen once again.

Different aspects of his life impacted the way that Truman decided to handle McCarthy during his time as president. One such aspect was the bullying he received as a child. McCullough discusses one particular instance where Truman admitted that he wasn't a fighter like many of the other boys his age and became known as a sissy among his peer group. A

¹² Ambrose, 137, 211, 217, 236, 273, 311.

particular area of torment for young Truman was his glasses.¹³ His brother tends to remember their childhood differently, but that often happens in family histories. This early life bullying could have soured Truman on men who act like bullies into their adulthood which would explain why McCarthy and Truman fought so often in the public eye.

The second section titled *Politician* focuses heavily on his time as a Kansas judge and later as a senator (a similar political background to McCarthy). It is in this section where McCullough talks about Truman's extensive support of President Roosevelt's New Deal. In particular, there's a quote where Truman says "I was a New Dealer from the start." This was a fact that McCullough backs up and even goes as far to say that there are few senators who could match Truman's level of support for the president.¹⁴ This was another area of friction between McCarthy and Truman. During McCarthy's 1946 primary campaign, he frequently attacked Truman for supporting the New Deal and continuing its ideas into the new era saying its bureaucracy was slowing down the nation and that similar Democratic policies were killing the American farmer.¹⁵

McCullough proceeds to discuss many of the issues that plagued his presidency in the section titled *The Weight of the World*. This section covers a wide range of issues such as Truman's inauguration day, the Korean War, the rebuilding of Europe, and most important to this research, his involvement with McCarthy. McCullough examines the questioning of General Harry Vaughn in front of McCarthy's Senate panel. McCullough admits that although Vaughn was a terrible public representative for the ideals of the administration, he was guilty of no wrongdoings, Communist or otherwise.¹⁶ Truman didn't see the baggage that Vaughn was

¹³ David McCullough, *Truman*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 47.

¹⁴ McCullough, 219.

¹⁵ O'Brien, 60.

¹⁶ McCullough, 746.

bringing to the administration and instead propped him up, refusing his resignation and claiming that the two would leave the White House together.

McCullough's book provides great insight to the inner workings of the Truman White House, as well as the political makeup of Congress during Truman's time as a senator. McCullough also provides a lot of context from Truman's early years that allow the reader to understand his personality type later in life, which can be extremely useful when a president undergoes such a public battle with a sitting senator. The one shortcoming is that he does not discuss much of the actual policy coming out of the White House and instead provides a series of stories and narratives designed to keep the reader interested in the larger picture.

When discussing presidents and McCarthy, one cannot discuss Truman without discussing Eisenhower. Jean Edward Smith does so in his work *Eisenhower: In War and Peace*. Smith approaches this book with a unique angle: that Eisenhower is the only president in modern history to preside over eight years of both peace and prosperity. Other presidents have seen peace and others prosperity, but never before or after Eisenhower, both. Like most other biographies Smith begins with Eisenhower's birth in Denison, Texas on October 14th, 1890 and continues through his early life in Kansas, enrollment in West Point and his work in the military through the end of the 1940s.¹⁷ He then examines his political life beginning with the presidential election in 1952 and details his varying policy decisions.

Important to this paper, he reveals a series of personal feelings from Eisenhower on McCarthy which have not received much public or scholarly attention. These thoughts and opinions help to understand Eisenhower's insight with McCarthy and why he chose to handle him in the way he did. This work differs in the work of others on this list because Smith tends to glorify Eisenhower in some fashions and choosing to dismiss his shortcomings on some

¹⁷ Jean Edward Smith, *Eisenhower: In War and Peace*, (New York: NY, Random House, 2013), 3.

occasions. For this research that sort of bias is not necessarily relevant, but still important to keep in mind.

The next set of works serves to put McCarthy into the context of history and examine his life as a citizen and a senator. The first of these works comes from author Michael O'Brien. O'Brien was an Associate Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley and published numerous works on figures both politically and culturally relevant to the state of Wisconsin.¹⁸ The name of this particular work is *McCarthy and McCarthyism in Wisconsin*. His book works to build a biographical foundation for McCarthy, something many others to this point fail to do.

The book begins with some of the more standard information that predated McCarthy's political career. O'Brien discusses his early life in Grand Chute growing up on the family farm as well as the role religion played with the large rural family. From there he talks about the varying feats McCarthy accomplished in his school such as graduating high school in a single year and moving on to Marquette University.¹⁹ Just like in high school, he graduated law school in an astonishing two years and passed the bar exam, joining one of the last classes to be admitted with only two years of undergraduate work.²⁰ He then talks about his eclectic involvement in the Democratic Party before moving to the right and running for office himself.

O'Brien dives into the ins and outs of McCarthy's two statewide campaigns for United States senator as well, showing that he preferred a more hands on and personal touch when connecting with voters. To illustrate that point O'Brien examines an interaction McCarthy has with a farmer during his 1939 run for the Tenth Judicial Circuit. McCarthy was out in a more rural part of the district and was making door to door contacts. He came across a farm house with

¹⁸ O'Brien, cover.

¹⁹ O'Brien, 7.

²⁰ O'Brien, 16

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some children playing with their family dog in the front yard. McCarthy stopped by and began to pet the dog and converse with the children. Finally their father came into the yard and began to talk to Joe himself. McCarthy asked about the family farm and inquired about the sick mare he had heard about from the farm next door. The two then moved into the barn and McCarthy helped with the chores which included milking the cows while the two discussed the election. The farmer was convinced on the spot to vote for the man based on that one experience.²¹

It is small stories like these that give useful insight into the man behind the infamous senator. They help to give a look into his personality that many authors gloss over and write off as anomalies which is why O'Brien's work is so important to this paper. To understand McCarthy as the witch hunter, one must first understand McCarthy as a person.

Another work which looks to discuss McCarthy's biography is Arthur Herman's *Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator*. To provide a little background, Herman was an adjunct professor of History at George Mason University before moving on to become a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute.²²

Like O'Brien, Herman serves to paint a picture of who McCarthy was as a man through the lens of a biography focusing on both his early years as a citizen and later as a politician. He begins his book with McCarthy as a child growing up on the family farm. He believes that the values he learned there continued with him the rest of his life, which provides a good bit of insight for this paper.²³ He proceeds to discuss McCarthy's role in World War II, his time as a judge, the 1946 election, his source of opposition and support at home, his fight against the press and the army, and finally his eventual censure.

²¹ O'Brien, 28-29.

²² Herman, cover.

²³ Herman, 22.

Herman's work is valuable in spite of his slight conservative bias because he provides many insights as to why McCarthy behaved the way he did in the Senate and how that won him support in Wisconsin as well as nationwide. It is a very similar work to O'Brien's *McCarthy and McCarthyism in Wisconsin*, which provides credibility to the analysis of both scholars.. It differs from other works on this list because it focuses more on McCarthy himself rather than on the policies he put forth and the interactions he had with the big political players of the time. That is not to say that this work does not cover those things, but it is just not the main focus.

An important factor to consider in the works written regarding McCarthy is the general lack of available material written by McCarthy himself. Many politicians have letter and speech collections that are available in their home states and on the internet, but McCarthy is different. His personal writings remain private and closely guarded at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the express request of his remaining family. This is why so many works lack McCarthy's voice and his thoughts, because the historians have no means to access this voice. Once the McCarthy archives open to the public there will undoubtedly be a rush of fresh takes on the senator.

Through the examination of the issues McCarthy was so heavily involved in, connections to other prominent politicians become more apparent. These issues serve as a lens to focus the argument on specific people and provide some context for the disagreements that resulted. Presidents Eisenhower and Truman, as well as members of their administration, dealt with McCarthy on a seemingly daily basis and each person had distinct interactions with McCarthy on the varying issues of the time. These interactions ended up shaping the policy, rhetoric, and actions of the two administrations which in turn sent the United States down a distinct path in the 1950s.

Section II: US Containment Policy Post World War II

With the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945, the war in Europe was officially over; however the Allied powers turned their attention to a new challenge, rebuilding a war torn Europe. Countries like Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium etc. remained in shambles after six long years of constant bombing by both the Allied and the Axis powers. With the emergence of the United States as the only superpower opposite the Soviet Union, President Truman and his administration felt it was their duty to help rebuild the continent in a modern democratic fashion and protect the world from the spread of Communism.

In order to make this widespread reconstruction happen while stopping Communism in Europe, Truman needed to have a comprehensive plan that would be able to pass the Senate by a wide margin. He assembled a team consisting of General George S. Marshall, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Charles Bohlen, Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Will Clayton, George Kennan, and many others to put this plan together, announce it to the world, and then have a vote in Congress.²⁴ The announcement came when General Marshall made his now famous speech during the commencement ceremony at Harvard University. In 1948 the 80th Congress of the United States passed the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948 (The Marshall Plan) 69-17 in the Senate and 329-74 in the House of Representatives.²⁵

Before looking at McCarthy's role in the Marshall Plan, it's important to know what exactly the Marshall Plan was. In Marshall's own words the plan was an economic stimulus package not directed "against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, despair and chaos."²⁶ In other words, it was comprised of loan and grants given by the United States to the

²⁴ McCullough, 561-563.

²⁵ "Foreign Assistance Act of 1948," The George C. Marshall Foundation, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/foreign-assistance-act-1948/>

²⁶ Berle, 200.

nations of Europe in order to rebuild their economies and infrastructure so that the world economy could flow seamlessly once more. The idea behind this world cooperation was to make Europe succeed together to remove some of the tension caused by the Axis powers following the war and also spread the ideas of freedom and democracy sought by the United States.²⁷ All in all the United States provided 57.3 billion dollars in aid to Europe between the years 1948 and 1951, but only the 13.9 billion from the first year went towards the actual Marshall Plan.²⁸

At the time of the vote Senator McCarthy was still fairly new in the Senate and had largely been towing the party line up until that point and continued on after that point until his Wheeling speech. However, he chose that moment to begin to first separate himself from the Republican establishment, as he was one of the 17 senators to vote against the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948. This was an opportunity McCarthy saw to go after Truman and General Marshall through legislation instead of his later method of hearings and the media. While McCarthy may have supported the ideas presented in the bill, he saw it as a way for General Marshall to weaken the goals of the United States in Europe and strengthen those of the Soviet Union. To that end, he believed that the plan was a means of rewarding our enemies after World War II.

Since the United States offered the Marshall Plan to all of Europe, including the Soviet bloc, McCarthy assumed it was a means to promote Communism through our state department. McCarthy whole heartedly believed that Marshall was a Communist sympathizer who was willing to sell out the world to the Soviet Union to avoid another war. McCarthy reported that Marshall warmed up to Stalin and even wore certain Soviet war medals to show his friendship

²⁷ Berle, 203.

²⁸ Berle, 208.

with the USSR.²⁹ He even said that Stalin would go out of his way to glorify the general in front of a crowd, so by McCarthy's logic, that made Marshall a sympathizer. While McCarthy may have supported the plan in principal, his opposition to the plan allowed him an early chance to receive media attention and get his voice out there. He was also able to critique one of his biggest early career enemies, George Marshall, in the process, making it a win-win for the senator.

An example of this attack strategy comes from McCarthy who believed that Marshall traveled to the USSR far too many times in order to confer with Soviet diplomats. When he returned from one of these trips, he allegedly tried to convince Senator Styles Bridges to appropriate 40 million dollars worth of goods to the Soviet Union under a lend-lease type of agreement. In a strange turn of events, McCarthy actually praised Marshall for leaving the country when he did, because it allowed the Truman administration to see clearly and craft an aid package to Turkey and Greece without an ally of the Soviet Union in the room. The aid package, which was a direct result of the Truman Doctrine (no new countries would fall to Communism), received praise from McCarthy as being "the most statesmen like approach made by the Truman administration to the whole post-war problem of containment."³⁰ That was a rare example of McCarthy and Truman actually agreeing on an issue and a course of action to fix said issue. McCarthy's praise for Truman in this instance illustrates that while he generally preferred grandstanding and being part of the opposition, he did hold certain mainstream beliefs and was willing to work with Truman to get them accomplished. However, that type of praise for a president, any president, did not happen often and McCarthy was soon back on the attack – a fact that did not escape future leaders who had to deal with him. Even presidents who served after the

²⁹ Joseph McCarthy, *America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Calett Marshall*, ed. Robert Welch (Appleton, WI: The Western Islands, 1965), 171.

³⁰ McCarthy, 173.

death of Senator McCarthy felt the effects of his movement and were very cognizant of how their foreign policy actions could lead to another person like him emerging. For example President Kennedy, who worked with McCarthy in the Senate, saw first what his battles against the presidency were like and took that into account when making decisions on Vietnam. In a meeting shortly before he traveled to Dallas in 1963, he requested a report from the State Department detailing every possible option he had available in Vietnam. After reviewing the report he told his aide that:

“In 1965 I’ll be one of the most unpopular presidents in history. I’ll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don’t care. If I tried to pull out completely now from Vietnam, we would have another Joe McCarthy Red scare on our hands but I can do it after I’m reelected, so we had better make damn sure I’m reelected.”³¹

President Kennedy was very aware that any kind of action that was weak on Communism could restart McCarthy’s movement even though it had been largely dead for six years at the time.

Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon B. Johnson also saw his fair share of McCarthy from his time as Speaker of the House. Knowing how Kennedy felt about McCarthy and his late power to influence Vietnam politics, he was extra cautious and fleshed out any foreign decision fully before bringing it to the public’s eye. In his memoir, LBJ writes how prevalent the anti-Communist movement still was even though it was not McCarthyism based any longer. The accusation of being soft on Communism could still cost votes and cause a politician to lose face with his constituents. Johnson chose to keep a positive outlook on his policy showing how the US was gaining self-confidence in itself through the space program, the military, the political defeat of Communist Cuba, and the growing tension between China and the Soviet Union.³²

³¹ Martin W. Sandler, *The Letters of John F. Kennedy* (New York: NY, Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 233.

³² Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969* (New York: NY Holt, Rinehart, and Winston 1971), 470.

Section III: Election Season

One of the areas that Joe McCarthy exerted a large amount of influence was elections both for himself and for his fellow Republicans. After his rise to fame in 1950, he became one of the most sought after endorsements for Republican Party in the entire country. In Wisconsin, Gubernatorial candidate Walter Kohler saw a large increase in attendance and support for his rallies when McCarthy would simply show up, let alone speak. Senator Robert Taft also sought the votes that McCarthy could bring. While he didn't always care for the way McCarthy carried himself, they did agree that Communism had no place in the United States and ended up appearing together at a fundraiser in Wisconsin.³³

Perhaps the biggest endorsement in the 1952 election was the one regarding General Dwight D. Eisenhower who on June 4th, 1952 threw his name late in the ring for the Republican nomination for president of the United States.³⁴ Since he entered the race so late he was not in serious competition for the remaining states on the primary schedule but instead made the push for a nomination on the floor of the Republican National Convention. From there he needed sweeping support from the entire party and thus required McCarthy's assistance both state and nationwide. It was no secret that McCarthy and Eisenhower did not see eye to eye on many issues (mainly personal conduct) which put McCarthy in the driver's seat to shift policy matters for the General. One case in particular comes into question during a campaign stop in McCarthy's home state of Wisconsin.

Eisenhower was to deliver a speech in Milwaukee that highlighted his military service and stand up for a fellow general, George Marshall, who had recently become a target for McCarthy over his Marshall Plan in Europe. Eisenhower, after much argument between his

³³ O'Brien, 104-106.

³⁴ Eisenhower, 32.

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advising staff, made crucial changes to speech in the sixth draft after McCarthy began considering stopping his campaign work in support of Eisenhower. Eisenhower's initial speech contained the following section:

The right to question a man's judgment carries with it no automatic right to question his honor. Here I have a case in mind. Charges of disloyalty have in the past been leveled against General George C. Marshall. I am not now discussing errors in judgment he may have made while serving in capacities other than military. But I was privileged throughout the years of World War II to know General Marshall personally as Chief of Staff of the Army. I know him, as a man and a soldier, to be dedicated with singular selfishness and the profoundest patriotism to the service of America. Here we have a sobering lesson of the way freedom must *not* defend itself.³⁵

As leader of the Allied forces during the war, General Eisenhower took an attack on one of his men as an attack on himself and an attack unbecoming to a member of the United States Senate. As passionate as he was about the issue, his advisors knew that he could not afford to make such an obvious dig at McCarthy in the state they needed to carry. Wisconsin Governor Walter Kohler Jr. (someone who won an election through the endorsement of McCarthy just two years earlier) flew down to meet Eisenhower in Peoria, Illinois before he was to make his way into the state. Kohler pleaded with Eisenhower to remove that section of the speech or risk losing the entire ticket to the Democrats.³⁶ This is a clear flexing of the proverbial muscles on the part of Senator McCarthy. He was able to control what the future leader of his party would say and how he was going to say it just to appease his supporters and earn his endorsement. With Eisenhower being such a proud man this sort of act had long strained the relations between the two according to Vice President Nixon.³⁷

Even when McCarthy was not directly weighing down the Eisenhower campaign, he would often prove to be a source of contradictions addressed in subsequent speeches. In a speech

³⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower to crowd in Milwaukee WI, October 3, 1952, Box 4, Stephen Benedict Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

³⁶ Eisenhower, 318.

³⁷ Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 140.

targeting Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson covered by the *Hamilton Daily News*, McCarthy charged the Governor with having indirectly supporting Communism and communists in the United States, which of course at the time was a grave insult to the character of a man in office. On the day the paper was covering the speeches, McCarthy had actually spoken earlier than Eisenhower, so he did not have a chance to offer an immediate rebuke. However, in Eisenhower's speech he made a planned, vague jab at McCarthy anyway saying that "we have to destroy the reputation of no innocent man."³⁸ These were often the types of rhetoric that Eisenhower would have to work into his stump speeches because of the constant media attention McCarthy was receiving.

Perhaps the biggest strategy that Eisenhower had to adopt in the campaign season was simply when not to address an issue. In September of 1952, Eisenhower held a meeting with Senator Taft designed to usher in a new era of cooperation after Taft suffered a personal defeat on the floor of the Republican National Convention that summer. The two met to discuss policy going forward and ways of handling the Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson. Knowing that the meeting's focus was on the campaign and the relationship of these two players in the Republican Party, the reporters afterwards swarmed Ike with questions regarding his agreement with Senator McCarthy. The instinct in that situation, and a common one at that, would be to condemn the senator on the spot for his divisive speech, but Ike simply pivoted the question towards Taft and left the room.³⁹ With a different tone of rhetoric on McCarthy's part, Eisenhower could have very simply answered the question and moved on with his business, but every answer needed a careful filter in order to keep the balance.

³⁸ "Political Campaigns Gain Momentum: Senator McCarthy Opens Heavy Attack on Stevenson, Says Candidate Has Given Aide to Communists," *Hamilton Journal*, October 28, 1952.

³⁹ Smith, 530-531.

Throughout the campaign season Eisenhower, Kohler, and Taft all had to tow a fine line of supporting McCarthy's ideas but condemning his practices. This allowed the men to appease both wings of their party. The strategies the men used differed because of their situations and level of office, but they all ultimately appeased McCarthy for his vote, showing that the senator had an incredible amount of influence during the election cycles he served in.

Section IV: Senate Confirmable Appointments and Political Operatives

Senator McCarthy is perhaps most famous for taking on the who's who of Hollywood in front of a national television audience during the height of his time in the Senate, but his work behind the public eye was just as influential. He fought the nominations of the two presidents he served under tooth and nail in order to keep, in his mind, the nation safe from foreign supervision. He also made it a point to attack those who worked within the respective administrations as full representatives for everything the presidents stood for whether they were actually speaking for the administrations or not.

McCarthy took this self-created sense of loyalty to the floor of the Senate and focused it against a sitting president, both of his opposing party (Democrat) and his home party (Republican). McCarthy launched an opposition force against Eisenhower's nominations of Charles E. Bohlen for Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Walter Bedell Smith for undersecretary of state, and James Bryant Conant for US High Commissioner for Germany. His attacks against Truman officials included General Harry Vaughn, General George Marshall, and Secretary Dean Acheson.

It is important to note that McCarthy was not able to launch these attacks alone, and often received support from his own wing of the Republican Party and even a niche group of the Democratic Party. These supporters included Senator William Jenner, Senator Pat McCarran,

Representative John Parnell Thomas, and Representative Harold Veldes. These men often allied themselves with McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade and offered their support and opinions on his attacks. After McCarthy had been censured and later died, those who remained in office (as many were defeated, jailed, or dead) largely rejoined the mainstream party ideologies and ceased their attacks. Even though they stopped their outright attacks on Eisenhower, their capacity to rise up once again loomed in the mind of future presidents. During the height of their power however, their attacks on Truman and Eisenhower were swift and in line with McCarthy.

While McCarthy's attacks on the Truman administration would today come as no surprise since the two men come from different parties, in that era polarization of politics was not as prevalent. The Cold War had created a situation of compromise out of the determination to survive as a country, something that is not prevalent in contemporary politics. However, the attacks on Truman or Eisenhower are not what gave McCarthy his influence or power, but it was the nature and character of the attacks that drew in so much attention. The very speech that made him an overnight sensation soon became a justification to begin a strict investigation of the State Department launched by the Democrats in the Senate in defense of their president. Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland was chosen to head this new loyalty subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, as he was believed to be fair while also holding large amounts of influence in the Senate.⁴⁰ While McCarthy did not actually sit on the committee, he managed to control the direction of the committee through his public accusations.

One of the more prominent men to go in front of the committee was Secretary of State Dean Acheson. On March 28th, 1950, Acheson was issued a subpoena signed by Senator Tydings to appear in front of the loyalty committee bringing with him every document the State

⁴⁰ McCullough, 766.

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Department had on a select list of personnel.⁴¹ That list was classified to the public and remains so today. While Acheson was not brought to defend himself, he was still a frequent target for McCarthy and bringing him in front of the committee gave McCarthy ammunition to use for the rest of the administration.

The attacks McCarthy leveled against General Harry Vaughn were much different than the ones he levied against Acheson. With the Secretary, he focused on his inability to do his job, allowing Communists to infiltrate our government; in contrast, with Vaughn he attacked his character. Before McCarthy targeted Vaughn, he was the subject of another investigation by Senator Clyde R. Hoey which charged the general with using his influence in the White House to secure government contracts for his close friends. What he did was not technically illegal at the time and a common practice for most politicians. However, Vaughn had hidden the fact that he had sent gifts to varying members of the administration which were seen as bribes of sorts to curry favor with his friends. Again that action was not illegal but it was inappropriate for a man in his position and it looked bad for the administration.⁴²

McCarthy had no part in accusing Vaughn of corruption, but did sit on the committee that investigated him and he saw it as a perfect opportunity to make a move against Truman. McCarthy used simple methods such as referring to Vaughn as Mr. Vaughn instead of General Vaughn, to get under his skin and cause a slip up. He also phrased questions to insinuate criminal activity such as calling a man Vaughn had supposedly helped Racket King Frank Costello instead of just Frank. In the end McCarthy had shown that Vaughn was a fool in the White House who was possibly corrupt and was advising the president on a daily basis. Whether it was true or not was not important to the media or to the American public who could now see that

⁴¹Subpoena, Senator Millard E. Tydings to Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson, March 28, 1950, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, Independence, MO.

⁴² McCullough, 746.

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Truman did not surround himself with the best people. What was perhaps more damning for Truman in the eyes of the Republicans was that he refused to accept the resignation of Vaughn, saying that they came into the White House together and that they would leave together. This was a weakness McCarthy could continue to exploit.⁴³

These frequent attacks on his cabinet worried Truman so much that he penned a letter to his wife Bess saying that:

What has made me so jittery-they started on Snyder and have almost broken him, then Vaughn, whose mental condition is very bad. Now they are after my top brain man in the Cabinet. The whole foreign policy is at stake just as we are on the road to a possible solution.....

McCarthy was clearly getting what he wanted out of his attacks if it made Truman doubt the competency of his cabinet which he so publically defended. Even though McCarthy's charges never materialized to anything, the fact of having your loyalty questioning on the national stage during a time when patriotism was at an all-time high would be enough to create self-doubt in any man. Truman realized and lamented that fact writing in his memoir that "frequently hearsay evidence is accepted as the truth and is used to smear a government employee in such a way that he cannot defend himself."⁴⁴ One can sense the frustration in Truman's writing for having to deal with issues of McCarthy's nature instead of leading the country. Without clear heads going forward, important aspects of that leadership such as foreign policy would become increasingly difficult to focus on which could prove dangerous during a time when nuclear war loomed over the world. If Truman's cabinet could not get past their own issues and focus on the greater threat of the Soviet Union, the Communists could take a stronger hold on certain parts of the world, proving that McCarthy was ultimately right in questioning Truman.

⁴³ McCullough, 747.

⁴⁴Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope 1946-1952*, (New York, NY: Doubleday Publishing 1956), 270.

President Truman may have allowed McCarthy's attacks to fluster those under his care, but President Eisenhower took a more hands off approach to McCarthy and let him burn himself out. This style may have come down to party membership and winning elections. While party polarization may not have been at an all time high, the two parties still had to compete with one another and still had different ideologies. With Truman being a Democrat, he was able to directly challenge McCarthy with no real threat of losing his base voters. He was also a lame duck president by choice, after personally deciding not to seek a second full term on inauguration day 1949.⁴⁵ This allowed him to confront McCarthy without fear of affecting the middle of the road voters because he knew that they did not matter to a man who is not seeking office. This strategy however, could have gone on to hurt Governor Adlai Stevenson who had to take up the torch for the party so closely linked with Truman.

President Eisenhower on the other hand was a member of the same Republican Party that McCarthy represented in the senate. His approach had to be much different, because publically attacking a popular member of your own party is an easy way to lose support from the base voters and from other prominent Republicans. Eisenhower had no real choice but to sit back and allow McCarthy to tarnish himself for the good of the country and for the unity of the Republican Party.

That is not to say that Ike did not privately disagree with McCarthy and let his rhetoric shape the policies put forth by his administration. While Eisenhower did not keep many records that gave proof of this, Vice President Nixon made notes of such actions and brought them to light in his memoirs. When High Commissioner Conant's name came forward for nomination McCarthy had began to gear up for a long fight on the floor of the Senate, and made his intentions clear with a strongly worded letter to President Eisenhower.

⁴⁵ Truman, 488.

In this letter, McCarthy opposed Conant on four counts with the first being his early advocacy for the destruction of all industry in West Berlin. The second being a 1940 article for *The Atlantic* where Conant advocated for the idea of redistributing wealth at the end of every generation even though he spoke of his opposition to Communism in the same article. The third is his opposition to parochial schools in Germany which he believed would “create a great deal of ill feeling toward America and furnish ammunition for the Communist propaganda guns.” The fourth and final count being his unequivocal support for Harvard University which McCarthy believed to be a hotbed for Communist sympathizers. He points out that he does not accuse Mr. Conant of being a Communist or being pro-Communist but instead presents his wording in a way that makes Conant appear to be less than intelligent enough for the job because of his naiveté over the seriousness of the Communist threat.⁴⁶ Fortunately for President Eisenhower, McCarthy’s letter was the only opposition he ended up offering for the nomination. After promising a long and hard fight against this nomination, Vice President Nixon claims he was able to talk McCarthy out of such a one sided fight. This is when McCarthy decided to send the letter instead.⁴⁷

If McCarthy questioned Eisenhower’s choice for the position of US High Commissioner, what does that say about McCarthy’s view of Eisenhower? Since there is little information available regarding McCarthy’s personal thoughts due to the restrictions his family chose to place on his personal papers, the information that is available often comes from the insights of those whom McCarthy attacked such as President Eisenhower. In a letter to his friend Harry Bullis, the onetime Chairman of General Mills Incorporated, Eisenhower implies that McCarthy liked nothing more than to received attention from the office of the president because it gives

⁴⁶ Joe McCarthy to Dwight D. Eisenhower, February 3, 1953, Box 22, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

⁴⁷ Nixon, 139.

him fuel to use in his crusade.⁴⁸ Eisenhower felt that this was far below his office and would not play into McCarthy's hand as Bullis wanted him to. This again shows that Eisenhower had to carefully tailor his rhetoric on a daily basis to avoid a direct and public confrontation with a member of his own party.

The same sentiment appears in a letter to Eisenhower's brother Milton in October of 1953. Eisenhower states that "only a shortsighted or completely inexperienced individual would urge the use of the office of the Presidency to give an opponent the publicity he so avidly desires." This is subtle dig against President Truman who so regularly used his office and his administration to fight McCarthy during his term, something which Eisenhower clearly did not agree with or condone. Eisenhower also makes note of his opinion of the media during the height of McCarthyism, which he views as too concerned with "human-interest, dramatic incidents, and bitter quarrels."⁴⁹ This is something that contradicts what Eisenhower believes in terms of public policy but privately, like in the case of his letters, is comfortable admitting which makes sense given the strains of leadership in such a high office.

As mentioned earlier in the section McCarthy opposed three nominations from Eisenhower, the first being Conant and the second being Charles E. Bohlen. Bohlen was a highly touted diplomat by Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who had served with the envoy that represented the United States at the Yalta Conference during World War II. This was also an area that earned him some ire from certain members of the Republican Senate who viewed the Yalta conference as a stepping stone to the current situation in Europe. Of course one

⁴⁸Dwight D. Eisenhower to Harry Bullis and response, May 18, 1953, Box 317, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

⁴⁹Dwight D. Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, 1952-1953, Box 12, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

of these men was Senator McCarthy who believed Eisenhower had made a mistake in not withdrawing Bohlen's nomination.⁵⁰

On the floor of the Senate during Bohlen's confirmation hearing, McCarthy launched an attack saying that "his entire history is one of cooperation with the Acheson-Hiss-Truman regime."⁵¹ This accusation was scathing because Alger Hiss was a scapegoat for the anti-Communist movement during the 1950s. In 1948 the House Un-American Activities Commission charged Hiss with perjury related to espionage due to his involvement with the Communist Party earlier in his life. To be associated with this was to be associated with Communism and McCarthy knew it. To charge the nominee of a newly elected Republican president with being close to Communism was exactly the kind of attention Eisenhower accused McCarthy of seeking out. Senator Pat McCarran then suggested that Bohlen was not able to pass a standard background check from the FBI and demanded the Senate examine his file, which led Eisenhower, trying to avoid further turmoil, to create a bipartisan panel to look into the matter. Senators Taft and John Sparkman read the file, determined there was nothing of importance, and recommended that the vote continue as planned. After the whole ordeal the opposing senators did not change their votes as futile as their attacks were and Bohlen received his confirmation 74-13.⁵²

The battle over Bohlen is the perfect example of the kind of response Eisenhower had to orchestrate in order to appease McCarthy and the far right wing of his own party. Bohlen came recommended by a Republican and supported by the Republican Senate, but Eisenhower still had to jump through hoops and delay the vote with the bipartisan panel, thus slowing down the gears of democracy for pure political purposes. Without McCarthy, senators like McCarran might not

⁵⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953-1956*, (New York: NY Doubleday Publishing, 1963), 212.

⁵¹ Eisenhower, 213.

⁵² Eisenhower, 213.

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have been able to get the media attention long enough to justify this sort of stunt and translate it into votes and/or support.

The third and final nomination opposition was actually the first levied by McCarthy. General Walter Bedell Smith was up for undersecretary of state, which was a very high cabinet position. Just two days into his tenure as president of the United States, McCarthy used his knowledge of Senate proceedings to put a halt on Smith's nomination due to charges of Communist sympathy and being a "fellow traveler."⁵³ In other words Smith had defended someone McCarthy had accused and now he was out for revenge. Eisenhower objected to McCarthy's opposition on the grounds that Smith was as conservative as conservative could be. Eisenhower felt personally attacked by this hold up because Smith had served as his chief of staff during the war and to accuse him of disloyalty could be taken as an accusation of Eisenhower himself in the eyes of the media. Eisenhower's strategy to handle this scenario was one he employed during the campaign: he simply deferred to Senator Taft. Taft reined McCarthy in and the hold on the nomination vanished.

Senator McCarthy forced President Eisenhower to adopt many different strategies because of his aggressive and self-serving actions while in office. These included handing off certain matters to senior Republican politicians, altering speeches, creating erroneous panels, second guessing nominations, and biting his tongue on certain issues that he normally would have spoken on. This is the sort of impact McCarthy had on the office of the president. His actions singled-handedly changed the way Eisenhower did business which ultimately changed the way he governed. However, it did allow Ike to paint a clear picture of what he was not. Compared to McCarthy he was calm, he was level-headed, he believed in personal integrity, he thought before he spoke, and he proved he wanted to be in office to help the people of the United

⁵³ Smith, 584.

States, not to further his own fame. This is perhaps the silver lining to dealing with McCarthy; he provided ways for politicians to show America their true colors.

Section V: McCarthyism Today

Senator McCarthy has been long dead, having met his demise in 1957 due to complications from alcohol; but that does not mean that his ideas and influence are not still operative. Even in the modern more progressive era there are still remnants of McCarthyism stemming largely from the original party that the ideas came from.

As recently as 2016, there have been calls to restart the House Un-American Activities Committee from former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.⁵⁴ When the committee officially began, the main target was Nazi influence in the government. Once World War II had ended it turned its attention to Communist infiltration which is when McCarthy participated in an unofficial capacity since he served in the Senate, not the House of Representatives. Now the witch hunt has returned to root out supporters of ISIS and other Islamic terrorist organizations. There has even been talk of holding Islamic communities to a higher standard because of the actions of a small minority population.

Another prominent political figure, although this one not elected, has expressed similar ideas of restarting the committee. Former White House Adviser and Editor-in-Chief of Breitbart News, Steve Bannon, has expressed similar ideas, arguing that McCarthy was right in his campaign for traitors and that maybe the United States needed to look into re-establishing a similar committee again. Representative Steve King of Iowa has voiced a similar desire to restart

⁵⁴ Gregory Krieg, "Newt Gingrich Wants New House Un-American Activities Committee," CNN News, June 14, 2016, accessed October 5, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/14/politics/newt-gingrich-house-un-american-activities-committee/index.html>

the House Internal Security Committee.⁵⁵ These calls for a renewal of McCarthyism have thus far failed to gain any real traction with the mainstream Republican Party. However, the ideology behind these calls has not.

While McCarthyism and anti-Communism have fallen by the wayside in American politics, the ideology of “Un-American Activities” has in fact grown stronger in recent years. That ideology is rooted in populism which has its adherents in both dominant political parties in the United States. In essence, populism is the idea that one person/candidate is the only legitimate candidate in a race and truly speaks for the common person.⁵⁶ These populists gain notoriety by criticizing the elite class who does not in fact support the needs and success of the common person. They use the ideas and the plight of the silent majority against their political adversaries who cannot refute them because the silent majority is not a defined group.⁵⁷ Even though populists claim to support the common person, they do not in fact want that common person to have a greater voice in politics, for it could challenge their rule. Populists govern in a way that keeps them in power for a longer duration of time, rather than in a way that benefits the country or the silent majority of which they speak. While populism may actually give a voice to certain groups who go unheard in the political realm, it demonizes those who disagree with it, causing political and social unrest.⁵⁸

Populism defined McCarthy’s political style and strategy before it received a name and political scientist began conducting research on it. McCarthy portrayed himself as a man who spoke for the common person in his home state of Wisconsin, and as someone who was the only

⁵⁵ Steve Benen, “Steve Bannon Believed Joe McCarthy’s Crusade was Right,” MSNBC News, March 3, 2017, accessed October 5, 2017, <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/steve-bannon-believed-joe-mccarthys-crusade-was-right>.

⁵⁶ Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016), 101.

⁵⁷ Müller, 102.

⁵⁸ Müller, 103.

voice of reason against a Truman government that catered to the elites of the country. McCarthy governed in an aggressive manner that kept his opponents on their toes in order to keep the microscope of politics off of him and focused on others. This allowed him to remain in office as long as he would have wanted if he would not have attacked the Army. McCarthy checks off all of the boxes of what a populist is, making him one of the early pioneers of this ideology in modern American politics.

The current term for populism in the mainstream media is Trumpism, and it bears a striking resemblance to the rhetoric and strategies used by Senator McCarthy. President Trump spoke in general terms during the election, telling those in his crowds “I will be your voice.” He is of course referring to the silent majority who according to him suffered and lost traction during the Obama administration.⁵⁹ The president has governed according to the populist ideology as well; by not accomplishing what he said he was going to while nonetheless declaring that his every action is a victory for the common person. Trump has also claimed he stands against the elite in the United States, such as those who run the media and those of the upper class (even though he himself is a part of that class). That is a core essence of populism. Whether or not President Trump states he is a populist, his actions and rhetoric align with those of populism, which are reminiscent of the McCarthy era of United States politics.

Section VI: Conclusion

Since Senator Joe McCarthy became a household name after his notorious speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, his name has been synonymous with anti-Communism and political witch hunts. Senator McCarthy’s impact on American politics went far beyond his movement, as

⁵⁹ Robin Tolmach Lakoff, “The Hollow Man: Donald Trump, Populism, and Post-Truth Politics,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 16, no. 4 (July 2017): 595-606. Accessed November 12, 2017.
<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uwec.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=f8d27348-81ac-4d7d-83d1-72151b39cedf%40sessionmgr4008>

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his influence on the executive branch played a heavy role in policy making. From battling Truman, to serving as a cautionary reminder to President's Kennedy and Johnson, McCarthy proved that one man and his followers could drastically change the way a President thought and spoke.

His actions served as a lightning rod of the American political machine, forcing Truman and Eisenhower to take his responses into consideration with almost every decision they made. These issues included US containment policy, the Marshall Plan, Senate confirmable appointments, members of the executive branch, and elections. No matter what the topic was, Senator McCarthy had an opinion on it and made it his job to be the center of attention on that issue. This caused Presidents Eisenhower and Truman to develop two distinct methods of handling the senator.

Truman, because of his lame duck status and membership in the Democratic Party was able to take a more confrontational approach to McCarthy without the fear of losing votes. On the other hand, Eisenhower was a Republican and had to allow McCarthy to battle himself for the good of the party of the presidency. Both of their methods had positives and negatives but it was ultimately Eisenhower's that proved victorious after McCarthy tarnished his career by attacking the United States Army. With his censure in 1954, McCarthy ceased his constant confrontations with the White House, and retreated within himself, soon becoming a cautionary tale for those politicians searching for fame.

McCarthy's impact also extended past the general workings of Congress and the White House and touched the election process. McCarthy's personal attack style of campaigning has now become the norm in Wisconsin and nationwide, as has his effort to connect with all voters. His influence became apparent throughout the election process as his endorsement was almost

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required to win an election. Names like Taft, Eisenhower, and Kohler all sought his endorsement and assistance for their elections, knowing that they could broaden their support networks. Once elected however, his endorsement meant very little to these men.

McCarthy's constant derailing of Senate confirmation hearings and charges of disloyalty were the prime reason that the presidents did not get along with McCarthy. He broke down the self-confidence of Truman's foreign policy team while also undermining the work of General Marshall to rebuild Europe. He attacked Eisenhower's popular nominations for US High Commissioner of Germany and Ambassador to the Soviet Union on political issues which were not necessarily relevant but politically damaging. With both presidents, he became a thorn in their side that they just could not shake.

While this paper addresses McCarthy's battles from the perspectives of the presidency, McCarthy's side of the story is harder to find. As mentioned in the literature review, McCarthy's personal collection of documents remains restricted at Marquette University at the request of his remaining family. When they decide to open the document collection up to historians, the motivations he had for his actions may become clearer, and the full story of the McCarthy era in American politics can finally be told.

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