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## Why I Believe Bush Must Go

Nixon Was Bad. These Guys Are Worse.

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By George McGovern  
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As we enter the eighth year of the Bush-Cheney administration, I have belatedly and painfully concluded that the only honorable course for me is to urge the impeachment of the president and the vice president.

After the 1972 presidential election, I stood clear of calls to impeach [President Richard M. Nixon](#) for his misconduct during the campaign. I thought that my joining the impeachment effort would be seen as an expression of personal vengeance toward the president who had defeated me.

Today I have made a different choice.

Of course, there seems to be little bipartisan support for impeachment. The political scene is marked by narrow and sometimes superficial partisanship, especially among Republicans, and a lack of courage and statesmanship on the part of too many Democratic politicians. So the chances of a bipartisan impeachment and conviction are not promising.

But what are the facts?

Bush and Cheney are clearly guilty of numerous impeachable offenses. They have repeatedly violated the Constitution. They have transgressed national and international law. They have lied to the American people time after time. Their conduct and their barbaric policies have reduced our beloved country to a historic low in the eyes of people around the world. These are truly "high crimes and misdemeanors," to use the constitutional standard.

From the beginning, the Bush-Cheney team's assumption of power was the product of questionable elections that probably should have been officially challenged -- perhaps even by a congressional investigation.

In a more fundamental sense, American democracy has been derailed throughout the Bush-Cheney regime. The dominant commitment of the administration has been a murderous, illegal, nonsensical war against [Iraq](#). That irresponsible venture has killed almost 4,000 Americans, left many times that number mentally or physically crippled, claimed the lives of an estimated 600,000 Iraqis (according to a careful October 2006 study from the [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#)) and laid waste their country. The financial cost to the United States is now \$250 million a day and is expected to exceed a total of \$1 trillion, most of which we have borrowed from the Chinese and others as our national debt has now climbed above \$9 trillion -- by far the highest in our national history.

All of this has been done without the declaration of war from Congress that the Constitution clearly requires, in defiance of the [U.N.](#) Charter and in violation of international law. This reckless disregard for life and property, as well as constitutional law, has been accompanied by the abuse of prisoners, including systematic torture, in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

I have not been heavily involved in singing the praises of the Nixon administration. But the case for impeaching Bush and Cheney is far stronger than was the case against Nixon and Vice President Spiro T. Agnew after the 1972 election. The nation would be much more secure and productive under a Nixon presidency than with Bush. Indeed, has any administration in our national history been so damaging as the Bush-Cheney era?

How could a once-admired, great nation fall into such a quagmire of killing, immorality and lawlessness?

It happened in part because the Bush-Cheney team repeatedly deceived Congress, the press and the public into believing that [Saddam Hussein](#) had nuclear arms and other horrifying banned weapons that were an "imminent threat" to the United States. The administration also led the public to believe that Iraq was involved in the 9/11 attacks -- another blatant falsehood. Many times in recent years, I have recalled Jefferson's observation: "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

The basic strategy of the administration has been to encourage a climate of fear, letting it exploit the 2001 [al-Qaeda](#) attacks not only to justify the invasion of Iraq but also to excuse such dangerous misbehavior as the illegal tapping of our telephones by government agents. The same fear-mongering has led government spokesmen and cooperative members of the press to imply that we are at war with the entire Arab and Muslim world -- more than a billion people.

Another shocking perversion has been the shipping of prisoners scooped off the streets of [Afghanistan](#) to [Guantanamo Bay, Cuba](#), and other countries without benefit of our time-tested laws of habeas corpus.

Although the president was advised by the intelligence agencies last August that [Iran](#) had no program to develop nuclear weapons, he continued to lie to the country and the world. This is the same strategy of deception that brought us into war in the Arabian Desert and could lead us into an unjustified invasion of Iran. I can say with some professional knowledge and experience that if Bush invades yet another Muslim oil state, it would mark the end of U.S. influence in the crucial [Middle East](#) for decades.

Ironically, while Bush and Cheney made counterterrorism the battle cry of their administration, their policies -- especially the war in Iraq -- have increased the terrorist threat and reduced the security of the United States. Consider the difference between the policies of the first [President Bush](#) and those of his son. When the Iraqi army marched into [Kuwait](#) in August 1990, President [George H.W. Bush](#) gathered the support of the entire world, including the United Nations, the [European Union](#) and most of the [Arab League](#), to quickly expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The Saudis and Japanese paid most of the cost. Instead of getting bogged down in a costly occupation, the administration established a policy of containing the [Baathist](#) regime with international arms inspectors, no-fly zones and economic sanctions. Iraq was left as a stable country with little or no capacity to threaten others.

Today, after five years of clumsy, mistaken policies and [U.S. military](#) occupation, Iraq has become a breeding ground of terrorism and bloody civil strife. It is no secret that former president Bush, his secretary of state, [James A. Baker III](#), and his national security adviser, Gen. [Brent Scowcroft](#), all opposed the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq.

In addition to the shocking breakdown of presidential legal and moral responsibility, there is the scandalous neglect and mishandling of the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe. The veteran [CNN](#) commentator Jack Cafferty condenses it to a sentence: "I have never ever seen anything as badly bungled and poorly handled as this situation in [New Orleans](#)." Any impeachment proceeding must include a careful and critical look at the collapse of presidential leadership in response to perhaps the worst natural disaster in U.S. history.

Impeachment is unlikely, of course. But we must still urge Congress to act. Impeachment, quite simply, is the procedure written into the Constitution to deal with presidents who violate the Constitution and the laws of the land. It is also a way to signal to the American people and the world that some of us feel strongly enough about the present drift of our country to support the impeachment of the false prophets who have led us astray. This, I believe, is the rightful course for an American patriot.

As former representative Elizabeth Holtzman, who played a key role in the Nixon impeachment proceedings, wrote two years ago, "it wasn't until the most recent revelations that President Bush directed the wiretapping of hundreds, possibly thousands, of Americans, in violation of the Foreign

Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) -- and argued that, as Commander in Chief, he had the right in the interests of national security to override our country's laws -- that I felt the same sinking feeling in my stomach as I did during Watergate. . . . A President, any President, who maintains that he is above the law -- and repeatedly violates the law -- thereby commits high crimes and misdemeanors."

I believe we have a chance to heal the wounds the nation has suffered in the opening decade of the 21st century. This recovery may take a generation and will depend on the election of a series of rational presidents and Congresses. At age 85, I won't be around to witness the completion of the difficult rebuilding of our sorely damaged country, but I'd like to hold on long enough to see the healing begin.

There has never been a day in my adult life when I would not have sacrificed that life to save the United States from genuine danger, such as the ones we faced when I served as a bomber pilot in World War II. We must be a great nation because from time to time, we make gigantic blunders, but so far, we have survived and recovered.

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