

EXORCISING EISENHOWER: THE IMPERATIVE OF CRITICAL
REMEMBRANCE IN OBAMA'S SEARCH FOR
FOREIGN POLICY RENEWAL

Lee-Anne Broadhead

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it has become increasingly fashionable to contrast two types of Republican politicians: the good “Eisenhower Republican” wary of the power of government and the military-industrial complex versus the bad “Junior Bush Republican” committed to the (ab)use of that power in pursuit of grand, hegemonic schemes. This trend led to support being offered to Barack Obama on the grounds that he is of the same mould as Eisenhower and thereby capable of pursuing a sensible foreign policy.

This article seeks to place Eisenhower's record in a more accurate light and reflects on the Eisenhower era's defining contradictions that could, if unacknowledged, return to haunt the Obama presidency. It reflects on the evident parallels between Eisenhower's policies and weaknesses and those of Barack Obama, and argues that a real break with the past necessitates a break with the logic of militarism and empire.

INTRODUCTION: “TO BE LIKE IKE”

For many Americans, a sense of relief and quiet confidence followed George W. Bush's declaration of an “end to major hostilities” in Iraq in May 2004. Standing on an aircraft carrier dressed in full bomber pilot regalia, the president was dwarfed by a “Mission Accomplished” banner designed to enhance his political reputation and announce to the world that his widely condemned policy had indeed been correct. It was not long, however, before commentators were discussing the spectre of Vietnam—a small country whose name has become synonymous with the military defeat and humbling