

MENDACITY, FABRICATION, DECEIT, MANIPULATION, SILENCE ... : THE USA'S LONG HISTORY OF LIES TO FOMENT WAR (AND AUSTRALIA'S COMPLICITY IN THEM)

By Don Longo

The 'drums of war' are again being beaten by our conservative politicians and their subservient mandarins of the public service. And the public is being given pretexts for beating the drums reminiscent of Cold War rhetoric. This is a dangerous and unacceptable strategy.

Australia is again blindly following US interests and related international policy against China. As a country we have become remarkably tolerant of convenient lies told to us by our allies and repeated ad nauseam by Australia's supine politicians. It is a sad thought, but perhaps we even prefer them to inconvenient truths and want to avoid the effort required to challenge the half-truths we are being told and the propaganda we are being fed. Why do we trust our politicians? Why are we not demanding the use of diplomacy to resolve disputes rather than applauding the rattling of sabres? Are we just deceiving ourselves about what little remains of our democracy?

More to the point, why indeed are we falling in line with US foreign policy at all when its history is peppered with fabrications and deceit in order to provoke and justify war and neo-colonial supremacy? There are plenty of examples from the past:-

In 2019, the US's Mike Pompeo said there was no question that Iran had initiated attacks on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Onan. The evidence was a grainy video with some tankers moving about. Very thin material on which to base a potentially devastating conflict. Australia chimed in with Pompeo's assertions.

In 2003 the US President declared that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, including a nuclear capacity, and that there were clear connections between Iraq and the al-Qaeda terrorists. Both claims were concocted. To bolster the lie, the CIA bent the evidence to fit the fabrication, and the bulk of the Western, including Australian, media and governments endorsed the deception. Dissent was unfashionable, and indeed regarded as close to treason. When it became clear that the justifications for military intervention were nonsense, a new rationale was invented, namely, that invasion was meant to create a democratic government in the centre of the Middle East. We now know that this invasion constitutes one of the greatest Western strategic blunders since Vietnam.

In 2001, in the wake of 9/11, a scapegoat was found in Afghanistan and its alleged harbouring of Al Qaeda terrorists. Instead of calling for the extradition of the terrorists and their putative leader, Osama bin Laden, which the Taliban government was willing to consider, the US refused diplomatic overtures. And when Al Qaeda was shown to be mostly prominent in Pakistan and that therefore the rationale for invading Afghanistan was foolish, it changed its rhetoric from a defence against 'terrorism' to 'regime change.' Who gave it a warrant for regime change? The question was hardly asked by the media and the Australian government just followed the US with its usual obedience. And now we have a Brereton Report about war crimes and a withdrawal of troops with virtually none of the stated goals being met.

In South America the US has a long history of lying to the public in support of its neo-colonial interests. In Grenada in 1983, the US maintained that it needed to protect American medical students from warring factions of the leftist party in power; in fact, the students had not been harmed and no explanation was given why the Grenadan government might take hostages at all. In Nicaragua in 1979, the US financed and publicly supported the Contras (right-wing rebel groups opposing the popular Sandinista government) despite their human rights abuses and their attacks on civilian targets. In Argentina in 1976, as in Chile in 1973, Bolivia in 1971 and Guatemala in the early 1950, the

US toppled democratically-elected governments in defence of its financial interests with cynical references to 'freedom' and 'democracy' in its statements to a docile and passive public, at home and in Australia.

And have we forgotten Vietnam in 1965, when the US used a fictional incident in the Gulf of Tonkin to justify massive military intervention in Southeast Asia that dragged Australia into an unwinnable and unjust war? The US told the world its ship USS Maddox had been attacked North Vietnamese gunboats in neutral waters, but in fact the waters were not neutral but disputed; and more to the point gunboat attack never actually happened! The 'enemy' might have just been a pod of whales. That didn't stop the US presenting the fictitious incident as 'open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America.' So began a disastrous seven-war. To add folly to lies, the US kept assuring the public that it was winning the war right up to the moment the lights in the U.S. embassy were turned off in 1975. And what about Korea in 1950? It was justified by an alleged attack, in June 1950, by the north against the south past the [38th] parallel that, the US claimed was an international boundary and therefore sacrosanct. The North claimed that the South had initiated the attack. There was in fact no reliable evidence on which to base either aggression, but, eager to get UN backing to prosecute a war with the North, the US did what it does best: it lied and attacked the North Koreans and even crossing the 38th parallel because, the US said contradicting previous statements, it was not an international boundary! Australia was silent on the contradictions and fell in with the US's fabrications.

I could go on and on, with similar duplicitous behaviour by the USA in the 19th century. The Spanish-American War began in 1898 when the US claimed that its warship had been blown up by Spanish saboteurs; it hadn't, but the government and the media repeated it so many times that the war was in full swing by the time reservations were expressed. Fifty years earlier, in 1846, the American-Mexican War was justified by a deceitful government campaign to persuade the public that Mexico had "spilled American blood on the American soil" in a territory (Texas) that wasn't at the time American soil at all. Moreover, the troops that had been attacked had been deliberately placed there by the USA to provoke Mexico.

Psychologists tell us that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. Thus we can expect the US will continue to lie to prosecute wars. And perhaps the Australian governments, Labor and Liberal, will continue to fall in with the deceptions and manipulations and sacrifice Australian citizens in defence of US power and wealth and the illusory pursuit of a unipolar world. It is incumbent on Australians of good will to resist the sound of the 'drums of war' and struggle for a peaceful resolution to international differences.

We need an independent and democratic Australia. Let us be masters of our own destiny!