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The US: The bully who cried wolf

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A habitual liar cannot be believed even when telling the truth.

There is a famous fable by ancient Greek storyteller Aesop about a shepherd boy who habitually lied for fun. While looking after a flock of sheep near a village, every now and then he would cry "Wolf! Wolf!" to bring the villagers rushing, just to laugh at them and their naivety. One day the wolf did actually attack his flock, and the shepherd boy cried "Wolf!! Wolf!"- this time for real.

But by then, the villagers had wisened up and ignored his cries. With no one coming to help, the boy could do nothing to stop the wolf feasting on his flock. Aesop concludes: "There is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth."

Thinking of this fable today, one cannot help but wonder: Did Iran [attack](#) the Japanese tanker Kokuka Courageous with limpet mines - as the United States claims it did on June 13? Does the [video](#) the US army produced indeed prove the accusation?

The US, [Saudi Arabia](#), and the [United Kingdom](#) say it does, [Iran](#) says it does not, and others have expressed doubts. So, who is telling the truth? Iran or the US and its allies? And why does it matter?

The urgency of these questions is now a matter of war and peace, of life or death. After that accusation, the potential military confrontation between the US and Iran has increased

exponentially. On June 20, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ([IRGC](#)) announced that it had [shot down](#) a US RQ-4A Global Hawk surveillance drone that it said had violated its airspace. US Central Command confirmed the drone was shot down by Iranian surface-to-air missiles but denied that it had violated Iranian airspace.

President [Donald Trump](#) called the downing of the drone a "big mistake", and then ordered a military attack on Iran only to reportedly [change his mind](#) and cancel it. There would have been approximately 150 Iranian casualties, Trump [said](#), and that would have been "disproportionate".

As the US and Iran inch ever closer to a military confrontation, the question the world faces at large is who to trust, what to believe, where to place our critical judgement?

### **An average of 12 lies a day**

As of June 10, [by Washington Post's](#) estimates, "President Trump has made 10,796 false or misleading claims over 869 days." That is probably a dictionary definition of a congenital liar. The newspaper further states: "The president crossed the 10,000 thresholds on April 26, and he has been averaging about 16 fishy claims a day since then. From the start of his presidency, he has averaged about 12 such claims a day."

In this context, it would be a mistake to judge the particulars of politics with the proverbial "Sunday School" sense of morality that is farthest removed from the abiding concerns of those who habitually lie. States, particularly the most powerful states, lie and these lies are for the best interests of the ruling elites in charge of those states.

From Vietnam to [Iraq](#), the US has systematically and consistently lied to advance its own warmongering objectives. But the US is not the only state that lies habitually.

Right now, the interests of the US, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates ([UAE](#)) and [Israel](#) all coalesce around targeting Iran and dismantling its share of regional power. Each one of these forces has its own internal reasons to wish Iran harm.

They, therefore, manufacture lies, exaggerate facts, take a smidgeon of truth and weave a long tale around it, all to turn Iran into a demon, the way they did with Iraq and [Afghanistan](#) in the past.

The US media is complicit in this charade. The Washington Post and the New York Times have stopped counting the lies Trump tells when it comes to the war with Iran.

The first casualty of war they say is the truth. That means all wars begin with a lie. Is the explosion of this Japanese tanker in the Gulf of Oman the lie that will result in yet another calamitous war in the region?

Today the fragile being of more than 80 million people is at the mercy of that piece of news for which John Bolton and Mike Pompeo have been gunning most of their political careers.

### **The regime of deception**

The regime of deception now code-named "post-truth" or "alternative facts" is predicated on what the French philosopher Guy Debord called "the society of the spectacle", where an image

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has assumed a reality of its own and it no longer matters what it actually means.

We see a ship burning and we read the story that the US imperial narrative ascribes to it and its media regurgitates. What actually caused that fire and what proof there is for the claim are all entirely irrelevant questions.

Three sources tell us Iran did it: the US, Saudi Arabia, and the UK. They all might be what we think them to be - habitual liars - but they might still be telling the truth that Iran did actually blow a hole in that ship. The problem is, as wise Aesop points out, "there is no believing a liar, even when he speaks the truth."

Let us take them one at a time. The US launched a massive military attack against Iraq and wreaked havoc in the region, all based on a blatant lie that [Saddam Hussein](#) had weapons of mass destruction - a lie that the Bush administration [staged](#) and the New York Times consistently collaborated. Under the current administration that habitual tendency of states to lie has been exacerbated by a man who has a very casual relationship with the truth.

What about the UK? They also say the Iranians did it. They may very well be telling the truth. But we know for a fact that the British have a long colonial proclivity to tell lies to suit their interests. One such sustained course of lies was directed against democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh during the CIA-MI6 military coup of 1953 staged against him. [The BBC was integral](#) in spreading fake news at the time.

Well, that is the past, you might say, today the UK is certainly the paragon of truth and justice. Indeed it might be, except that it recently [chose](#) to turn its back on the truth: "The UK refuses to back UN inquiry into Saudi 'war crimes' amid fears it will damage trade Britain's Middle East and North Africa minister Alistair Burt argued that the Saudi-led coalition itself should investigate any atrocities it committed in its conflict against rebel forces in Yemen."

Can we really trust a treacherous regime that has an equally causal relationship with truth and can turn a blind eye to facts when it suits its purposes?

What about Saudi Arabia, which too has claimed Iranians did it. Certainly, Mohammed bin Salman ([MBS](#)) could be a trustworthy source - except, he and his backers have repeatedly [lied](#) to the public in the face of facts about the tragic fate of slain Saudi journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#). The same Saudi prince - a favourite of New York Times columnists and President Trump's Zionist son-in-law - is chiefly responsible for a genocide in Yemen [in which](#) "85,000 children have died from starvation".

None of this is to exempt Iran from being part and parcel of the selfsame scene and engaging in its own game of lies. Despite the death toll in Syria surpassing half a million, it has continued to fabricate a story about supporting a "legitimate government", while Bashar al-Assad has continued in a sustained course of murderous mayhem. Indeed, the Iranian authorities may very well have planted that mine in the Japanese tanker.

The issue we face is not the guilt or innocence of any party involved, but, instead, the complete collapse of any moral authority standing on the side of truth.

Nietzsche famously said: "Truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour."

In the Gulf of Oman, the truth has dived into the lowest depths of the sea in search of new, more convincing, metaphors.

***The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.***

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