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Inventing war is an American tradition

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Lies to provoke wars with Venezuela and Iran may seem like a Trumpian phenomena but, the practice is as old as America itself.

Early European settlers along with their colonial governments consistently lied and provoked Native American tribes into wars in order to obtain the lands they coveted. These tactics which began over 150 years before the American Revolution continued for another 150 years afterwards as First Nation peoples were consigned to some of the least habitable lands in the lower 48.

The Mexican/American War was precipitated when President James Polk sent an American military detachment into Mexico. When Mexican forces responded with force, Polk falsely claimed that the attack had occurred on American soil. An elderly John Quincy Adams and a young Abraham Lincoln were not fooled by this deception and voiced their disapproval but to no avail.

The sinking of the USS Maine in the Havana Harbor is considered by many to be a false flag event to rationalize America's imperialistic appetite. With the Spanish empire in decline, the United States annexed Cuba and Puerto Rico. Turning its attention to the Pacific, the U.S. fought an ugly war against indigenous leaders in the Philippines who considered American colonialists no different than the Spanish. Reflecting on his experiences in the Caribbean and the Pacific, Major General Smedley Butler, the most decorated Marine of his era, would say in his book, *War is a Racket*, and that he was a "gangster for Wall Street."

The Gulf of Tonkin incident was a lie Lyndon Johnson used to further engage the American people and its military into the Viet Nam war. Lies and deceptions about that war were not confined to the Johnson presidency. Beginning with Eisenhower's cabinet, the lies continued through Nixon whose hyperbole rationalized the invasion of Cambodia.

With no credible supporting evidence, the Bush administration promoted the lie that Saddam Hussein had helped plan the September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers. The Bush administration next falsely claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The ensuing Middle Eastern wars, the longest in American history, have claimed over 10,000 American lives, a half million civilian deaths, and millions of internal and external refugees. The Iraq war which most American politicians of both stripes nonchalantly refer to as a "mistake", should be better understood as a gigantic humanitarian tragedy built on an edifice of lies.

Rhetoric from the Trump administration suggests that we can justify the overthrow of President Maduro in order to alleviate the economic hardship of the people of Venezuela. A decade of harsh U.S. economic sanctions, more recently tightened under the Trump administration, exposes the lie that Trump's desire for regime change emanates from honest concern for the Venezuelan people.

The recent Gulf of Hormuz attack on a Japanese oil tanker has all the earmarks of a false flag incident with Iran having no obvious reason to attack a country to whom it would like to sell its oil. Nevertheless, the Trump administration quickly concluded that Iran was the culprit despite no collaborative evidence. Few Americans are aware that in 1953 the U.S. helped to overthrow Iran's democratically elected government and replaced it with a harsh dictator which the U.S. supported for decades. Publicly, our government denied any involvement in Iran's internal affairs.

Perhaps the American people really don't care if they are lied into another war. Most of our recent wars have been fought without a draft and rather than raise taxes to fight wars our government simply borrows the money and passes the debt onto future generations. Most Americans are only vaguely aware of the countries where we are fighting. In fact, we have over 800 bases in 80 different countries. While accurate figures are classified, supposedly as a matter of national security, it is likely we are spending over a trillion dollars a year on our military which is more than the military spending by the next seven countries combined, most of whom are our allies.

There have always been personal sacrifices for America's wars but, for the most part, our wars and the lies that promoted them have not been costly to the nation as a whole. Indeed, our past wars have usually resulted in the acquisition of land, wealth, and power. That might be changing.

Our recent incursions into the Middle East may have benefitted America's military-industrial-legislative complex but our general economy has not prospered and there is no clear military victory in sight. Perhaps it is time for America to re-assess its participation in wars. That reassessment should begin with telling the truth about our past while carefully examining the facts and motives of those who would lead us into another war.

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