

A Century of Lies: The Rationales for Engaging in Foreign Wars, A Century-old White House Tradition

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Global Research, September 01, 2013

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

If President Barack Obama and his administration are not lying in the lead-up to a probable bombing campaign of Syria it will be a rare exception among US Presidents, particularly since their public duplicity concerning war dates to at least the early twentieth century.

Indeed, being forthrightly dishonest to the American people concerning the rationales for engaging in foreign wars has become a century-old White House tradition.

The historical record of past presidents' prewar and wartime hucksterism is unambiguous, greatly contributing to the immense bloodshed and destruction that continues under the country's reckless international leadership to this day.



Woodrow Wilson: Sinking of the Lusitania–World War I, 1917-1918

“It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and a temperateness of judgment befitting our character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.” April 2, 1917



Franklin D. Roosevelt: Embargo against Japan, Pearl Harbor—World War II, 1941-1945

“Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 — a date which will live in infamy — the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.” December 8, 1941

✘ **Harry S. Truman:** Threat of Communism, Violation of UN Charter–Korean War 1950-1953

“On Sunday, June 25th, Communist forces attacked the Republic of Korea. This attack has made it clear, beyond all doubt, that the international Communist movement is willing to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations. An act of aggression such as this creates a very real danger to the security of all free nations. The attack upon Korea was an outright breach of the peace and a violation of the Charter of the United Nations. By their actions in Korea, Communist leaders have demonstrated their contempt for the basic moral principles on which the United Nations is founded. This is a direct challenge to the efforts of the free nations to build the kind of world in which men can live in freedom and peace. This challenge has been presented squarely. We must meet it squarely. . . .” July 19, 1950



Lyndon B. Johnson: Tonkin Gulf Incident, “Domino Effect”—Vietnam War, 1964-1974; “War on Poverty”

“Last night I announced to the American people that the North Vietnamese regime had conducted further deliberate attacks against U.S. naval vessels operating in international waters, and therefore directed air action against gunboats and supporting facilities used in these hostile operations. This air action has now been carried out with substantial damage to the boats and facilities. Two U.S. aircraft were lost in the action. After consultation with the leaders of both parties in the Congress, I further announced a decision to ask the Congress for a resolution expressing the unity and determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in southeast Asia. These latest actions of the North Vietnamese regime have given’ a new and grave turn to the already serious situation in southeast Asia.” August 5, 1964

✘ **Richard M. Nixon:** “Vietnamization”; Bombing of Cambodia, 1969-1973; “War on Crime”

“Tonight, American and South Vietnamese units will attack the headquarters for the entire Communist military operation in South Vietnam ... This is not an invasion of Cambodia ... We take this action not for the purpose of expanding the war into Cambodia but for the purpose of ending the war in Vietnam and winning the just peace we all desire. We have made we will continue to make every possible effort to end this war through negotiation at the conference table rather than through more fighting on the battlefield.... The action that I have announced tonight puts the leaders of North Vietnam on notice that we will be patient in working for peace; we will be conciliatory at the conference table, but we will not be humiliated. We will not be defeated.” April 30, 1970



Ronald Reagan: Threat to American medical students—Invasion of Grenada, 1983; Bombing of Libya, 1986; US vs. “Evil Empire”—Cold War 1981-1989; “I don’t recall.”—Iran-Contra; “War on Drugs” “In all, Reagan said ‘I don’t recall’ or ‘I can’t remember’ 88 times in the eight hours of testimony on Iran-Contra on Feb. 16-17, 1990,” the *New York Times* observes. “I remember being told that there were certain levels of government or agencies and so forth that were not prohibited by the Boland Amendment, and I remember that. And this was in connection with my telling us that we must stay within the law and so forth. And I never challenged or questioned what I was told about that or something else because, not being a lawyer myself, but being surrounded by a number of them in government, I figured that I was hearing the truth when they told me that something could be done and still be exempt from the Boland Amendment.” February 16-17, 1990



George H. W. Bush: “Drug indicted dictator” Manuel Noriega—Invasion of Panama, 1989; “Incubator Babies Story”—Gulf War, 1991; “War on Drugs” (continued)

“And I am very much concerned, not just about the physical dismantling but of the brutality that has now been written on by Amnesty International confirming some of the tales told us by the Amir of brutality. It’s just unbelievable, some of the things at least he reflected. I mean, people on a dialysis machine cut off, the machine sent to Baghdad; babies in incubators heaved out of the incubators and the incubators themselves sent to Baghdad. Now, I don’t know how many of these tales can be authenticated, but I do know that when the Amir was here he was speaking from the heart. And after that came Amnesty International, who were debriefing many of the people at the border. And it’s sickening.” October 9, 1990



William J. Clinton: “Humanitarian

Intervention”—NATO bombing of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995; “Humanitarian Intervention”—NATO bombing of Yugoslavia 1999

“Our humanitarian coordinator, Brian Atwood, who just returned from the region, has described an elderly Albanian woman he met in a camp outside Tirana. She saw all the male members of her family and most of the men in her village rounded up by Serbian authorities, tied up, doused with gasoline, and set on fire in front of their families. It’s the kind of story that would be too horrible to believe if it were not so consistent with what so many other refugees have been saying. What we need to remember is that this is the result of a meticulously planned campaign, not an isolated incident of out-of-control rage, a campaign organized by the government of Belgrade for a specific political purpose -to maintain its grip over Kosovo by ridding the land of its people. This policy must be defeated.” April 28, 1999



George W. Bush: “Al Qaeda” attack of

9/11—Afghanistan, 2001-present, “War on Terror,”—2001-present; 9/11 and Iraq’s alleged “Weapons of Mass Destruction”—Iraq 2003-present

“Facing clear evidence or peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud. Understanding the threats of our time, knowing the designs and deceptions of the Iraqi regime, we have every reason to assume the worst, and we have an urgent duty to prevent the worst from occurring.” October 6, 2002



Barack H. Obama: “Humanitarian Intervention” and “Responsibility to Protect”—NATO Bombing, Guerrilla War in Libya, 2011; “Humanitarian Intervention” and “Responsibility to Protect”—Guerrilla War in Syria 2011-present

“In a volatile situation like this one, it is imperative that the nations and peoples of the world speak with one voice, and that has been our focus ... Yesterday a unanimous U.N. Security Council sent a clear message that it condemns the violence in Libya, supports accountability for the perpetrators, and stands with the Libyan people. Like all governments, the Libyan government has a responsibility to refrain from violence, to allow humanitarian assistance to reach those in need, and to respect the rights of its people. It must be held accountable for its failure to meet those responsibilities, and face the cost of continued violations of human rights.”
February 22, 2011

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James F. Tracy was a tenured Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Florida Atlantic University from 2002 to 2016. He was fired by FAU ostensibly for violating the university's policies imposed on the free speech rights of faculty. Tracy has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the university, with trial set to begin November 27, 2017. Tracy received his PhD from University of Iowa. His work on media history, politics and culture has appeared in a wide variety of academic journals, edited volumes, and alternative news and opinion

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