# Government Lying: Necessary Evil?

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## Introduction

The citizens always have discussed the morality of deceptions of the governments. The issue has mainly two sides, one being “For” government lying and the other side being “Against” it. However, there is a side that says it “Depends” on the situation. Our project focuses on whether it is okay for a government to lie to its people and the evidence that is for and/or against the issue as a whole.

## Methods

- Articles from databases, such as EBSCOhost and ProQuest
- Articles from Google Scholar
- Discussions based on each other’s point of view on the topic
- Key terms: deception, government, war, national security

## “Against”

- **Vietnam War:** LBJ used Gulf of Tonkin Incident to win legislative authority and to bring Gulf of Tonkin Resolution into effect.
  - Gulf of Tonkin Incident didn’t really happen.
  - Gulf of Tonkin Resolution started the Vietnam War and brought disastrous casualties.
- **Ira War:** US invaded Iraq for having “Weapons of Mass Destruction”.
  - There were no active WMD programs by the Iraqis in 2003/04.
  - The war led to serious casualties and left Iraq in chaos.
- Honesty is one of the universal virtues.
- Kant disallows lying in any circumstances.

## “For”

- **Our government’s recent mission to capture and eliminate terrorist threat Osama Bin Laden.**
- By not revealing information about the mission to the public, the mission was successfully carried out bringing happiness and security to the majority of American people and other persons affected by Bin Laden’s actions.
- **The Trojan Horse** was sent by the Greeks to the Trojans as a peace offering but was actually the Trojans’ demise and proved to be a clever and very beneficial tactic for the Greeks.
- In 1945, President Truman had to make the decision of whether to bomb Japan or not and kept it hidden from the public until he made a decision.
- He ended up dropping the bomb on Nagasaki, ultimately ending World War II.

## “Depends”

- **The government should be able to lie under extreme circumstances.**
  - Ex.- May 2nd 2011, when President Obama withheld information that American armed forces were going to invade Bin Laden’s compound.
  - What could have happened if the truth was released?
  - Bin Laden could have found out this information and moved to another location; thus he might have been alive today.
  - When national security would be threatened by the truth being told to the public.
- Utilitarianism: lying should be allowed if it brings happiness and minimizes pain.

## Findings

- Instances in which a government can lie or not tell the truth are when lies are beneficial to the people.
- Government lies only work if they favor the interests of the people or the government performing the action.
- However, the government ought not to lie because it causes distress and problems within the society.
- Also, government lies can bring unforeseen events, such as casualties, and can also start wars.
- The government should be able to lie to its people only when national security is threatened.

## References