

Let the Audience Beware

by [Donald L. Losman](#) (April 2025)



The Lie (Félix Vallotton, 1898)

The modern world is flooded—via radio, TV, newspapers, and the internet—with seemingly credible pronouncements. However, the public sphere is really mainly loaded with useless ‘noise,’ deliberate obfuscations, and downright lies. As Alexander Pope warned us long ago, “a little learning is a dangerous thing.” Clearly, a more discerning acceptance by the public is almost always warranted.

For example, on January 14 former Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, reminded us that “each time Israel completes its military operations and pulls back, Hamas militants re-group and re-emerge because there’s nothing left to fill the void.”

That is a very strange statement from an administration which almost relentlessly pressured Israel to exercise restraint. He also labelled Hamas's ability to keep recruiting fighters "a recipe for an enduring insurgency and perpetual war." Nonetheless, the very next day he expressed cautious optimism that the newly proposed ceasefire would work. What happened to his previously-noted 'Hamas ability to re-group'?

On this same issue, for which Qatar was deeply involved, its prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, stated that the ceasefire's "success would depend on Israel and Hamas acting in good faith in order to ensure that this agreement does not collapse." The wording here is partially befuddling. Hamas is a blood thirsty terrorist gang which is expected to act "in good faith"? This is like letting an armed burglar into your house if he promises not to take anything!

And in early March, after Phase 1 negotiations between Israel and Hamas collapsed, Israel halted aid shipments into Gaza. Egypt then issued a statement which "unequivocally rejected the politicization of humanitarian aid ... as a tool of blackmail." Strangely, Egypt issued no similar blackmail claim when Hamas originally took hostages and made its own demands.

The Washington Post claims that Donald Trump, during his first presidency, made over 30,000 false or misleading statements. It also found 78 such statements made by President Biden during his first 100 days. And who can forget Biden's repeated promise to not pardon his son, Hunter?

Such 'stretches' in language and/or deliberate misinformation are hardly limited to public officials. A Boeing example is illustrative. In October, 2018, a Boeing 737 MAX plane crashed in Indonesia. According to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), both Boeing and CEO Muilenburg knew that the flight control function posed safety concerns, but they nonetheless assured the public that the 737 MAX was "as safe as any airplane that has ever flown the skies." In March,

2019, another 737 MAX crashed, this time in Ethiopia. Once again Boeing gave assurances of the airplane's safety, with no mention of the flight control issue. After completing its subsequent investigation, SEC Chair Gary Gensler stated that "In times of crisis and tragedy, it is especially important that public companies and executives provide full, fair, and truthful disclosures ... the Boeing Company and its former CEO ... failed in this most basic obligation."

Similarly, last September California's Attorney General Rob Bonta filed a lawsuit against ExxonMobil. "For decades," Bonta stated, "ExxonMobil has been deceiving the public to convince us that plastic recycling could solve the plastic waste and pollution crisis when they clearly knew this wasn't possible. ExxonMobil lied to further its record-breaking profits..."

Alarmist predictions, which often evoke excessive attention and national concern, are also generally dubious. For example, *Time* magazine's June 24, 1974 science column noted that scientists have concluded that "the atmosphere has become cooler over the past three decades." With "no signs of reversing," it appropriately labelled these experts as 'Climatological Cassandras,' but nonetheless [warned](#) that "the weather aberrations they are studying may be the harbinger of another ice age!" Back in 1959, Arthur Summerfield, U.S. Postmaster General, [claimed](#) that "Before man reaches the moon, your mail will be delivered within hours from New York to Australia by guided missiles. We stand on the threshold of rocket mail." In 1977, Ken Olson, founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, [stated](#) that "There is no reason for any individual to want to have a computer in his home." And in 2007, while Apple was about to launch the first smart phone, Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's CEO at the time, [offered](#) "There's no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share."

Mayors, presidents, prime ministers, and many others provide a plethora of information which shapes public perceptions. The

previous examples, however, remind us that many such statements are often for hidden private purposes, image development, and obfuscation. Only rarely do they depict unblemished truth. Accordingly, the public must remain skeptical and not readily embrace such pronouncements as fully credible.

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Donald L. Losman, PhD, lives in Orlando after spending 37 years with the Federal government.

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