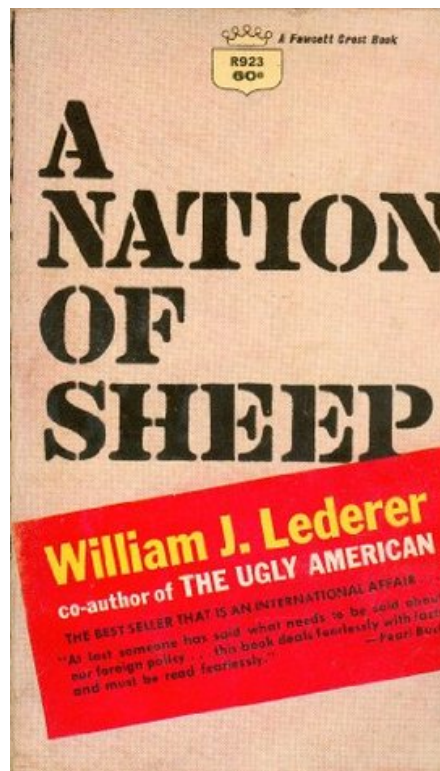




A Nation of Sheep

William J. Lederer

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A Nation of Sheep

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Discusses the effects of the apathy and ignorance of the American people on United States foreign policy, relations with other nations, and use of foreign aid funds.

A Nation of Sheep Details

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Ramez says

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DoubleM says

I originally read this book in the mid-1960 and was not mature enough to quite understand the author's points; however, this second reading, and the political/social/cultural mess I have lived in during all that time, convinces me Lederer was right. We, the people, have given our thinking processes over to Big business/Big Government/and those who don't know how to do anything except manipulate money and the populace. The end of democracy in 2016, which has just expired, only contributed to my disgust with the insane world we live in. We are no longer a nation of freedom, only those who control the arms and purse strings have any freedom - we did it to ourselves by listening to the opinions of others and not listening to our own basic intelligence. A Nation of Sheep is a most appropriate epithet for individual liberty, an obituary for the form of government upon which the United States was formed: United States of America - RIP.

John says

While elements of this book are clearly dated (generalizations about large groups of people--like saying that Koreans make crafty thieves--are no longer appropriate), it's central message is still important today: US citizens and their government need to be well-informed about world events and truly understand the effects of our foreign policy on the hearts and minds of common people throughout the world.

Hossam Saed Samy says

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Mike says

It is interesting that the author's observation that "the world has become local" was offered way before the internet and Tom Friedman's "The World is Flat".

I first read this book over 40 years ago. It is an easy read and one of my touchstones. It is one of those books that I like to keep handy on the shelf.

The book underscores the need for a disciplined approach to reading/viewing the news, e.g. know something about the author/reporter, be skeptical, and do not rely on one source. It also provides suggestions about getting the family involved in reading/viewing the news. Inspired by this book, we made a point of discussing news at meal times while our children were growing up. I can tell you that these news discussions made a difference in school and in my children's adult lives.

The book is partially a tome on the state of journalism, governmental attitudes toward voluntarily providing information, and a citizen's need to be informed. The book's basic premise still resonates today, that is: (1). Our government representatives, either through ignorance or intent, as well as the press are not always honest with us, and (2). An informed and proactive citizenry is the best antidote. Furthermore, the author states that a US citizen must perform a citizen's duties in everyday life and the state of the nation depends upon its individual citizens.

The author opines that a citizen has a duty to keep his or herself informed as well as conveying their thinking on the issues to both those reporting the news and their elected representatives. He believes that the state of our nation can be changed from the bottom up through an active and informed citizenry. In other words, our national ignorance and lack of participation allows others to decide what type of government we get.

The author includes a list and analysis of foreign policy missteps that may at first glance seem dated, but at second glance provide the reader with a sense of déjà vu. WMD anyone!

Being informed is in our own self-interest, because, as the author points out, an uninformed people become a misinformed people and therefore are not a free people.

Caroline says

I bought this book at a used book shop for 10 cents because I thought the title was relevant. The book was published in the 60s but still contains themes that are relevant today: mistrust of media, public ignorance, and corruption. However, the author makes sweeping generalizations about large groups of people; such as, calling the Chinese arrogant and the Koreans "crafty thieves". It's a book about America's corruption in Asia with a side of racism. I may have wasted a dime.

Mike Emmett says

What annoyed me the most was the fact that he presented so much as fact, yet presented no footnotes, no end notes to validate what he wrote. How are we to know if it was merely an opinion, if he was recording false info or even if he was right? He records of how we are to avoid people as sources as being agents with a motive, yet he relies so heavily on people as sources, maybe they were agents feeding him false info. He states the obvious the foreign policy in the US, heck in any nation is not perfect. He states some good things on what to do to be knowledgeable. His info and opinions are late for 2012, what he felt or saw then has changed with a new generation in play as well as attitudes changing. An interesting read but again, where are his facts, where are his notes and sources? How can we trust him? And the newspapers he wants us to trust... many of them then and now are still awful and in trouble for false info among other things... if one wants to read it, I say go ahead but keep an open mind.

Alas, I just remembered.. What also bugged me was that he kept calling America a democracy, sorry bud, we are a Republic, the Founders intended and stated as much and were against the idea of America ever being a democracy. With that, credibility went down a bit for me

Natalie Williams says

If you want to know a bit of history on how America handles its foreign affairs with all the delicacy of a bull in a china shop, this is the book for you.

Theophilus (Theo) says

This was a reread. I read it many (many) years ago, but the current state of U.S. politics made me want to read it again to see if we had made any progress in how we formulate and implement our foreign policy. What did I find out? Sadly, we seem doomed to repeat our actions of the 1950s and 60s over and over again. It's "Groundhog Day" in a much more serious and deadly arena. Albert Einstein must be chuckling wryly, or grimacing in his grave as we do the same actions over and over again and expect different results. If you've never read this, try it. It's less than 200 pages, but it should make you think. Back before the Vietnam War was over, Lederer brought to our attention how we ended up in that quagmire. Jump ahead to 2002 and we have sadly not advanced much in our political process and how we develop and administer our foreign policy. Government budget cuts have decimated our intelligence services. The media moguls have seen fit to

close many of their foreign posts and rely instead on social media to report the "facts" of situation overseas that might embroil us in a costly and deadly conflict thousands of miles away in a place most of us know very little about.

Michael David says

In 1960s America, there were many questions from Americans as regards USA's involvement in foreign countries. One immediately thinks of Cuba and Vietnam, but as this book illustrates, America had its fingers in a lot of countries' pies. It's more of a historical curio than anything, but I enjoyed how its advice to the lay people (like us) applies even now. Lederer actually made me realize that the first president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, was a lot like our Ferdinand Marcos - and both were supported by the USA.

Lederer's advice to his readers applies even to Facebook users nowadays: always think before you speak anything, or post anything on Facebook. 'In a democracy where so many are inarticulate, the voices that do speak carry enormous weight. (p. 135)' I think this definitely applies to fake news: a lot of Facebook users fail to think through what they read online that they fail to assess the veracity of the posts they've read. One must read and observe in order to know what is right. A lot of Filipinos bypass that critical act of thinking before posting, and this was what Lederer preached against fifty years ago. There can be no discernment without reflection.

Mohammed says

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Sameh Diyab says

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Charles says

An accurate explanation of U. S. foreign policy failures then and now

Given the current situation of the United States in Iraq and the circumstances as to how the U. S. got involved, one would think that it was a historical abnormality. However, in reading accurate histories and this book it is all too clear that it is not. For many different reasons, some noble and honest, but others simply due to greed and stupidity, the U. S. government has consistently lied to the American people about foreign entanglements. In this book Lederer describes some of the most absurd deceptions perpetrated by American presidents.

They are:

*) "The Laos Fraud", the supposed invasion of Laos by the North Vietnamese, a scam perpetrated by some members of the Laotian government in collusion with members of the U. S. military and government. To react to the "great threat" billions of dollars of American aid was sent into the country.

*) "The Editor from Thailand", a description of how the ruling elite of Thailand solicits American aid by claiming fear of the communist bogeyman and how most is pocketed by corrupt Thais.

*) "What We Aren't Told About Formosa", an accurate description of Chiang Kai-shek and how his government in China was so corrupt and inefficient that it was bound to fail. Lederer also describes how ruthless his government was in destroying the native Formosan culture and in attaining and maintaining his power.

*) "What We Aren't Told About Korea", a description of the brutality and corruption of the Syngman Rhee government of South Korea. In many ways, Rhee was just as repressive as many of the communist governments that the U. S. so strongly opposed.

Lederer then goes on to describe how other programs, supposedly designed to further American goodwill around the world have had the opposite effect. Aid moneys are regularly skimmed into the pockets of local government and military officials so that only a small portion actually reaches the hands of those who need it.

Lederer also is harsh with the members of the press, who accept subtle bribes to write positive stories and who sometimes are a party to outright fraudulent stories. At the end, the advice he gives is sound, even though as recent events indicate, it is not being followed any more now as in 1961. That advice is that citizens must be soundly informed and willing to make their opinions heard. As scandal after scandal over the current Iraq war continues to surface and we learn more and more about how the American invasion was launched, it is clear that Lederer's position is just as true now as it was in 1961.

This review also appears on Amazon

Dave/Maggie Bean says

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose...

Tariq Alferis says

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[illegible][illegible]

I know the author felt this to be a nonfiction but to me it was all fiction, all made up in the mind of the author, yes there were facts but these facts were presented from the point of view of the author . He was looking for anything to make his book more sellable to those looking for corruption behind every corner. For me the book was just way out in left field.

[illegible]

Georgia says

Though this book is slightly outdated the message is still the same. We are a nation in decline because we choose not to be educated on what is important. We get the government that we deserve because we refuse to ask the tough questions of our representatives and fail to hold them accountabale for what we need.

Hiba says

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