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Based on 20th century examples, communication strategists must incorporate three key elements into their campaigns to generate and maintain public support during a future war against a peer adversary. They must diversify their themes and messages as the war progresses, use a variety of mediums in order to disseminate their information to multiple target audiences, and create a layered communication strategy through the use of a variety of spokespeople and experts in order to add credibility and resonance to the information they are distributing.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Public Support in Great Power Conflict

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 2020-21

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Executive Summary

Title: Public Support in Great Power Conflict

Author: Major Cassandra Gesecki

Thesis: Based on 20th century examples, communication strategists must incorporate three key elements into their campaigns to generate and maintain public support during a future war against a peer adversary. They must diversify their themes and messages as the war progresses, use a variety of mediums in order to disseminate their information to multiple target audiences, and create a layered communication strategy through the use of a variety of spokespeople and experts in order to add credibility and resonance to the information they are distributing.

Discussion: Gaining domestic public support for a large-scale war is critical if a nation is going to be successful in that conflict. More importantly, maintaining that backing over the course of months, or even years can be even more vital, as the people of a nation begin question their sustained sacrifice. In the future, U.S. leadership will need figure out the best practices for gaining and maintaining domestic public support for a large-scale, long-lasting conflict with China or another peer-competitor.

Argument: Gaining public support for a cause, especially one as significant as waging war upon another nation, is essential. Looking back at historical examples in the previous two world wars, American leaders took different approaches to gaining public support for their war efforts, but many elements of their plans were the same. Their communication experts adjusted their strategies as the conflict evolved and adapted their tactics as public opinion changed.

Conclusion: While a communication strategy for a future great war will look different than the two previous due to the changing character in war, advancements in technology, and access to information, the communication organizations and tactics from both wars have laid out the basic fundamentals of a successful future information management campaign.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Introduction

As the United States looks to the future and considers potential options to counter the rising threats from other peer, competitor nations, policymakers must plan for a high intensity war. If the U.S. is going to be successful in a future large-scale conflict, American leaders must consider how to gain domestic, public support for war. Historical evidence shows that policymakers will seek out opportunities to convince Americans to actively support and participate in the war effort, to sacrifice for their country. Developing of public opinion is an ever-changing process of creating new ideas, sharing them, and adjusting them as they affect a group's thinking and behavior; in a future great war, the U.S. government's information strategy will have to be fluid and adaptable.¹ Based on 20th century examples, communication strategists must incorporate three key elements into their campaigns to generate and maintain public support during a future total war. They must diversify their themes and messages as the war progresses, use a variety of mediums in order to disseminate their information to multiple target audiences, and create a layered communication strategy through the use of a variety of spokespeople and experts in order to add credibility and resonance to the information they are distributing.

Varied and Changing Themes

Communication strategists must constantly re-examine and re-shape the themes and messages that make up an information campaign. At the start of a war, the language a government uses to explain the reasons of entering into combat in order to generate domestic support will set a foundation for future operations in the information environment. In both world wars, early U.S. messaging efforts focused on demonizing the enemy. During the First World War, the campaign was primarily concentrated on the Germans; during the Second World War, it

¹ Glen M. Broom and Bey-Ling Sha, *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, Boston, Pearson (2013), 177.

shifted between the Germans and the Japanese. This technique of villainizing a specific group of people promoted the public's aversion to them; offered conduit for unifying Americans with a common goal of victory over those groups; and created an "us versus them" mentality. However, that was not enough to sustain public support as the war continued. As the nature and tempo of the two wars progressed and began to affect citizens in new and unexpected ways, the language that the government used to maintain public support also had to change. Historically, U.S. officials focused on three strategic themes in both world wars: shared animosity toward a common enemy, a collective passion to defend one's country, and lastly, a calling to support a greater objective of global peace and prosperity.

The first theme, a shared hatred toward a common enemy existed in both wars. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson's administration established the U.S. Committee on Public Information (CPI), also known as the Creel Committee after its founder George Creel, to sell the U.S.'s involvement in the First World War to the American public.² Creel's team quickly vilified not just the actions, but also the culture and mindset of the enemy. There were already stereotypes surrounding the Germans, and Creel's team capitalized on them. The myth of "the spirit of 1914," which was the belief that in August of 1914, German society transformed and became full of "war enthusiasm," shaped American opinion of the Germans.³ CPI propagandists portrayed "the Hun" as the enemy of civilized people and a direct threat to humanity and culture worldwide.⁴ They publicized German atrocities in Belgium and France, in an attempt to influence Americans into thinking that the carnage they depicted was an accurate portrayal of a

² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda*, 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, xi.

³ David Welch and Jo Fox. *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 88.

⁴ Peter Stansky, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*. Vol. 40 MIT Press, 2010, 51.

future if the Germans won the war.⁵ Artists designed posters or pamphlets portraying the German soldier in an inhuman manner, such as “creeping over the edge of...an abstracted landscape of general ruin, his fingernails stained with blood and blood dripping from his bayonet.”⁶ The CPI capitalized on an already existing aversion toward Germans and further spread hatred for “all things German” across the country, inciting paranoia of German spies determined to take over the world.⁷ The CPI’s indicatives were extremely effective, causing a “torrent of mistrust and hysteria across the nation...uniting most of the public in a common cause and a common hatred.”⁸ These communication efforts reinforced a collective sense of repulsion toward Germans and increased American support for the war.

A directed propaganda campaign portraying an entire nation as a threat to America was not just limited to the First World War. In 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI) and appointed renowned author and journalist, Elmer Davis as its director. The role of the OWI was to coordinate the release of information from the government to the American public.⁹ Elements of the OWI used both sensationalized rumors as well as true events from the war, in order to bolster the targeted villainizing of both Germans and the Japanese. Through the OWI, government officials (to include the President himself) timed the release of specific details about the war in order to “heighten the public’s hatred” toward the enemy.¹⁰ Graphic details from the battlefield, like the trial, suffering, and death of the Doolittle pilots at the hands of their Japanese captors became main points the Hollywood film, *The Purple*

⁵ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 164.

⁶ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 143.

⁷ Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942 – 1945*, Yale Historical Publ. Miscellany. Vol. 118. Yale Univ. Pr, (1978), 3.

⁸ Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 156

⁹ Peter Karsten. 2005. *Encyclopedia of War and American Society*. Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, 604.

¹⁰ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany*, New York: Oxford University Press (2003), 200.

Heart.¹¹ To more widely publicize the release of the film and to further drive home anti-Japanese sentiment, the U.S. government timed the distribution of information regarding two true and shocking atrocities during the war with the release of this film's debut in 1944. The two incidents, the Bataan Death March, and the discovery of a Japanese soldier's diary that described the beheading of a U.S. prisoner of war, both occurred years prior to the release of *The Purple Heart*. But by publicizing the true events at the same time as the film, the U.S. government fueled the sentiment that the Japanese were not just "an enemy that deserved to be exterminated, but had to be."¹² The collective opinion of hatred and disgust from Americans toward the Japanese lasted throughout the war and well after its end.

The Japanese were not the only focus of the OWI during the World War 2. While public hatred toward Germany never reached the level of that of their Asian ally, the administration was strategic about how and when to stoke domestic aversion toward the German population through their communication campaigns.¹³ President Roosevelt's perceptions of Germans were shaped by his experiences while studying there as a young man. He was familiar with the militarization of the German people from a young age, and thus wary of it.¹⁴ Roosevelt's childhood convinced him long before American entrance into the war that Germany was America's greatest threat.¹⁵ That personal bias combined with reports from Britain and other European nations about Germany growing "stronger and more dangerous than Japan will ever be," fueled his "Germany First" campaign and shaped much of the OWI's communication efforts.¹⁶ While at times, Roosevelt's information campaign attempted to point out the difference between the Nazis and

¹¹ Dower, John, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986, 50.

¹² John Dower, *War without Mercy*, 52.

¹³ John Dower, *War without Mercy*, 52.

¹⁴ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 132.

¹⁵ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 83.

¹⁶ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 85.

the civilian German population, it was impossible to keep the two separate for the entirety of the war. The distinction between these two groups of people was evidenced through Roosevelt's public remarks, especially during an election year when the German-American vote was at stake.¹⁷ However, President Roosevelt's rhetoric towards Germany changed drastically in the later years of the war in order to drive public support for his post-war plans for Germany, which involved destroying the "economic and social basis" of the entire country – not just the Nazis.¹⁸ This proposal was titled the Morgenthau Plan, after the Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau. Morgenthau returned from Europe in 1944 and, armed with the information gained from British and other Allied leaders, assessed that their plan for post-war Germany was not nearly harsh enough to prevent Germany "from starting World War III."¹⁹ He and the President developed a new plan that involved not only the complete disarmament of Germany, but also initiatives meant to weaken the entire German population, stripping the people of any potential future ability to wage war, eradicating their industries, and turning the country into a "non-productive ghost territory."²⁰ While the State Department aggressively opposed this plan and the President eventually had to abandon it after public fury spurred by leaks to the media, his public remarks about separating the Nazi soldiers from the rest of German civilization changed, and become more hostile in nature toward the entire country and culture of Germany.

Thanks to a combination of public remarks from the President himself and the efforts of the OWI, the public eventually began to view both the Nazi forces and the German people as one and the same and supported the harsh terms that Roosevelt laid out, for the entire population.²¹

¹⁷ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 147.

¹⁸ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 174.

¹⁹ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 177.

²⁰ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 178.

²¹ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 181.

Opinion polls from the war showed the majority of Americans supported a “harsh peace” with Germany and agreed that it should remain a “third-rate power” following the end of the war.²² These polls showed that, throughout the American public “73 percent...wanted to keep Germany as a third-rate power, while 51 percent opposed rebuilding any German industries possessing war potential.”²³ Additionally, surveys showed that the public’s acknowledgement of the German threat at the time, not only bolstered support for the nation’s efforts in World War 2 but the popularity of the war also grew, largely because the public recognized that the German threat had been credible in 1917 as well.²⁴ The Roosevelt administration’s depiction of the German people as a threat to the entire world helped bolster public support for a war against the Axis. Years after the end of hostilities, public support for America’s involvement in the First World War was still high, with polls showing more than 66 percent of the U.S. population still in support of the war effort.²⁵

However, as much as a staunch hatred for a certain group of people can act as a powerful tool in driving public backing for a war effort, it was not the only premise on which the communication agencies from both world wars based their efforts. The second messaging theme that communications experts and policymakers adopted had more intrinsic value: that these wars were not just about destroying the enemy, but also about the honor and morality associated with sacrificing for one’s country and home.²⁶ In order to generate more public support for the war, policymakers appealed to the American ideology of service and personal sacrifice; communication experts knew that “although hatred of the enemy proved a powerful forces, even

²² Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 182.

²³ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 182.

²⁴ John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, Wiley, New York (1973), 169.

²⁵ John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, 169.

²⁶ Peter Stansky, *The Last Great War*, 69.

more potent was the demand that every person prove his loyalty.”²⁷ Public opinion polls at that time showed that the number of Americans who believed that all “able-bodied men” should serve in the military, doubled during the World War 2.²⁸ In order to communicate the benefits of self-sacrifice for one’s nation, propagandists targeted three key demographics as the wars waged on: the average Caucasian fighting-aged male, minorities and immigrants, and women.

Communication experts used the image of the fighting-aged man defending his family and his home to generate a shared sentiment of duty. Characters seen throughout American history such as the film portrayal of Sergeant Alvin York during the First World War in *Sergeant York* portrayed the all-American hero as someone with whom the average American male could relate.²⁹ Raised as a humble, God-fearing, Tennessee farmer, York not only approved the Warner Brother’s rendition of his actions during the battle of Meuse-Argonne, but he also spoke publicly to movie-goers at the premier of *Sergeant York*. With the First Lady and General John Pershing by his side, he addressed a crowd of veterans at the theater, reinforcing his participation in the war and asserting that if Americans ever stopped fighting for liberty, “then we owe the memory of George Washington an apology” for his efforts were in vain.³⁰ The U.S. Army went on to take full advantage of the film and used York’s story to target other fighting-aged men throughout America.

During World War 2, Hollywood producers created inspirational films that targeted potential service members as well as “incentive films,” which were aimed at workers in production plants.³¹ Producers argued that movies such as *Full Speed Ahead* and *December 7th*

²⁷ Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 155

²⁸ Adam J. Berinsky, et al, "Revisiting Public Opinion in the 1930s and 1940s," *Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 3 (Jul, 2011), 520.

²⁹ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 100.

³⁰ Susan A Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq*, New York: Oxford University Press (2009), 92.

³¹ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 62.

appealed to this category of American men because “in these incentive films, they can see *their* tanks, *their* planes, *their* guns blaze into action.”³² As both wars waged on, other films, radio broadcasts, and television shows honed in on specific ethics that Americans valued: God-fearing, hardworking, honest and dependable were all common traits a fighting-aged male at the time would have been proud to possess. So, both the Creel Committee and the OWI focused their communication strategies to appeal to those personality qualities to encourage support for the war – both on the battlefield and the home front.

Wartime propaganda also targeted minorities and immigrants during the world wars. Communication experts used the long-nurtured image of America as a country that had a “tolerantly inclusive, fair-minded, ‘melting pot’ society” to create propaganda products to generate not only support, but also service from minority groups across the country.³³ During the onset of the First World War, then Major Douglas MacArthur put together the “Rainbow Division,” to send overseas as one of the first units to deploy to France in support of the war effort. He built this unit from men across the country so the public didn’t perceive that the first American men to fight in the war didn’t come from just one state. Through the inclusion of men from around the country, the War Department communicated that the sacrifice and honor of being the first to fight in this war didn’t just come from one area of the country. Instead, MacArthur “also acting as the War Department’s press person... said the division would stretch across the United States ‘like a rainbow.’”³⁴ One of the more predominant topics “pushed by the OWI not only in film but also through advertising and other popular media was that of unity.”³⁵

³² Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 63.

³³ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, New York: Oxford University Press (1999), 760.

³⁴ Eric Durr, “‘Rainbow Division’ That Represented the United States Formed in New York in August 1917.” www.army.mil. New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, July 24, 2017.

³⁵ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women: Adapting Women for Hollywood's World War II Home-Front Films," *Americana* (Hollywood, Calif.) (2016), 3.

However, this was no small task for the Creel Committee during the First World War, as “long before the war, immigrants had been the target of suspicion, prejudice and outright hatred,” so a large portion of the CPI’s mission during this time was to unify the populations that were born within and outside of America’s borders.³⁶ This communication strategy had two challenges associated with it: encouraging loyalty and support from immigrants or “foreign-born” while also inhibiting the “nativist combination of intolerance, self-righteousness and hysteria.”³⁷ Films such as MGM’s *Bataan* portrayed the blended platoon or showed immigrants fighting for America together, in order to create a unified culture regardless of any man’s ancestry. The “Americans All” and the melting pot campaigns in the U.S. film industry in the 1940s strove to project hatred outwardly (against an enemy who looked non-American) while also attempting to cull racism domestically by portraying military leaders on screen demanding that their soldiers operate as “a harmonious machine” and ordering them to “cast out all prejudices – racial, religious and every other kind.”³⁸

This task was made increasingly more difficult following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The oppressive treatment of Japanese-Americans was a stark contrast to the president’s belief of the “Four Freedoms” of humanity. During his 1941 Annual Message to Congress, Roosevelt described the “fundamental principles of free men and free women everywhere: freedom of speech and expression; freedom of worship; freedom from want—a healthy, peacetime life; and freedom from fear.”³⁹ Despite the president’s rhetoric, however racism still ran rampant throughout the United States. Hollywood filmmakers did find ways to work around the growing racism; one tactic they would use was the common theme of religion to promote the

³⁶ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 178.

³⁷ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 179.

³⁸ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 139.

³⁹ James J. Kimble, "The Illustrated Four Freedoms: FDR, Rockwell, and the Margins of the Rhetorical Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2015), 47.

idea of racial equality throughout the ranks and unify men from various ethnic backgrounds. Movies like *Guadalcanal Diary* and *Pride of the Marines* emphasized that there “were no atheists in Hollywood’s foxholes” by showing how differences “melted away in the heat of battle” regardless of your race.⁴⁰ Filmmakers used this theme of religion as way for all men to see themselves in the characters portrayed on the screen, skin color notwithstanding.

Fighting-aged men were not exclusively the target audience of the wars’ communication and recruiting campaigns. Various forms of propaganda strove to elicit support from women as well. During World War 2, magazines, films, and posters portrayed images of women both to inspire their support for their male family members fighting overseas and to encourage recruitment of women themselves. Based on the notion that a woman supportive of the war effort “freed a man to fight,” publishers, photographers, and screenplay writers portrayed images of a woman as “saddened, no doubt thinking of her boyfriend overseas, demonstrating her allegiance to the Corps” or describing women’s “clerical responsibilities to take care of their male counterparts.”⁴¹ During World War 2, there were efforts tailored specifically to garner support from women. Due to the increased participation (by men) in the armed forces, the domestic labor market suffered and greatly threatened the industrial support for the war. Part of the government’s solution to this was to persuade more women to trade their domestic roles within the home for “the industrial workforce to take the place of the drafted men.”⁴²

The Roosevelt administration created the War Manpower Commission (WMC) in 1942 to work with the OWI to encourage filmmakers to create movies that inspired women to actively

⁴⁰ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 141.

⁴¹ Heather P. Venable, *How the Few Became the Proud*, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2019, 189.

⁴² William J Breen, "Women and Work: The Limits of War Manpower Commission Policy in World War II," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* (2001), 62.

support the war effort.⁴³ Since women movie-goers made up “approximately two-thirds of the home-front audience,” it made sense for the OWI to work closely with Hollywood to reach this key demographic.⁴⁴ The themes of the films shifted as the war progressed and the nature of the female protagonist sometimes changed, but overall the women on screen epitomized selflessness and sacrifice. Movies like “*Mrs. Miniver* (Wyler 1942), *Since You Went Away* (Cromwell 1944), and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (Wyler 1946) offered models of wartime women and messages about appropriate home-front living.”⁴⁵ These films showcased “women power” by celebrating good home-front behavior; portraying women dutifully surviving off rations, volunteering, and using their “natural skills” where they would shine, like sewing silk parachutes or working with delicate precision instruments.⁴⁶ Through the portrayal of both positive and negative examples, the women on screen demonstrated the morally proper ways that women could – and should support the war effort.⁴⁷

While the first two themes of creating a shared hatred toward a common enemy and inspiring a collective sense of support for the defense of one’s home were powerful tools in the communication plans for both world wars, a third messaging theme also developed: compelling Americans to abandon the isolationist sentiment and support the fight for the good of the world. During both world wars, Americans questioned why their country was involved in a conflict that, at first glance did not affect them, and communication strategists had to fight against the isolationist mindset that was predominant during the first half of the Twentieth Century.⁴⁸ Both Presidents fought against the isolationist mentality and insisted “that America’s free way of life

⁴³ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women", 1.

⁴⁴ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women", 11.

⁴⁵ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women", 2.

⁴⁶ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 153.

⁴⁷ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women", 2.

⁴⁸ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 200.

would never survive in a Nazi-dominated world.”⁴⁹ Each war eventually became a war “for humanity and civilization...a means of not continuing past political practice, but of changing the existing status quo.”⁵⁰

In the First World War, Creel and his team attempted emphasize Wilson’s sense of “responsibility for the welfare and stability of the international order as a whole” through their messaging efforts.⁵¹ The CPI recruited experts from academia to create and distribute pamphlets to a mass domestic audience, depicting Wilson’s idealism, the reasons for going to war, and the consequences of what would happen, on a global scale, if Germany won the war. Stanford Historian, John S. P. Tatlock, was more widely quoted than any of the others. He “took what he claimed to be documented ‘facts’ of German conduct in Belgium and France and extrapolated them to create a lurid imaginary vision of a German invasion of the United States.”⁵² This pamphlet, titled “Why America Fights Germany” was one of the more shocking products of the CPI, and analyzed German’s historical atrocities through consideration of how the world would look if they weren’t stopped. Describing the capture of New York City, the burning down of small towns around the world, the defiling of women, and mass murder of innocent civilians, Tatlock depicted the Germany’s campaign in grotesque detail.⁵³ It was an effective tool in demonstrating how German atrocities from overseas could find their way around the world if the U.S. did not rise up to stop them.

Likewise, long before the U.S. became involved in World War 2, President Roosevelt was acutely aware of the isolationist mentality throughout the country and the need to shift it to

⁴⁹ Ross A. Kennedy, "Strategic Calculations In Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality Policy, 1914–1917," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (2018), 615.

⁵⁰ David Welch and Jo Fox. *Justifying War*, 7.

⁵¹ Ross A. Kennedy, "Four New Takes on Wilson, World War I, and the Making of the Post-War Order." *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2018), 1068.

⁵² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 164.

⁵³ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 165.

gain public support. Prior to the U.S. involvement in the war, he publicly challenged the general isolationist sentiment and the notion that the U.S. could stay out of conflicts simply by ignoring international affairs taking place overseas.⁵⁴ In 1941, he challenged Americans in the “most dramatic fashion,” describing the Axis powers as “assailants” with the objective of “snuffing out of the whole pattern of democratic life” around the world.⁵⁵ In a message to Congress that same year, he argued that the U.S. needed to stand for “the justice of morality” and should defend “the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small.”⁵⁶ This rhetoric continued throughout the war, despite the ebbs and flows of the public’s support of the president’s decisions regarding U.S. involvement. In 1942, Roosevelt again emphasized to the media that:

We are fighting today for security, for progress and for peace, not only for ourselves, but for all men, not only for one generation but for all generations. We are fighting to cleanse the world of ancient evils, ancient ills.⁵⁷

Communication experts during both wars created products that drove home the point that “isolationism only works until the enemy comes to your front door -- then it is the lives of innocent wives and children, and a country’s entire way of life, that is at risk.”⁵⁸ Both Wilson’s and FDR’s administrations attempted to cull isolationist sentiment. They focused their communication efforts on two topics: the importance of stopping an evil that could change the future state of the world and the reasons why America, as a strong nation, has an obligation to help stop innocent bloodshed across the globe.

⁵⁴ Peter Mauch, "Asia-Pacific," in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, Cambridge University Press, (2015), 266.

⁵⁵ James J. Kimble, "The Illustrated Four Freedoms," 49.

⁵⁶ James J. Kimble, "The Illustrated Four Freedoms," 49.

⁵⁷ Susan A Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 87.

⁵⁸ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women", 4.

Many Americans did not consider the wars in Europe or the Pacific as their battles. Both Presidents had to convince their constituents that just because two oceans separated America from the conflict, the results of the wars could drastically affect the nation, and more importantly, the state of the world. Propaganda posters displayed graphic images of the “Hun” lurking over parts of the world or cityscapes that appeared to be parts of the U.S. (Figure 1). From the very beginning of America’s involvement in the First World War, the CPI was charged with carrying the message of President Wilson’s justification for entering into the war; he described the conflict as “a war to end all wars” and claimed that “winning it would make the world safe for democracy.”⁵⁹ George Creel and his team created products that proclaimed to their domestic audience that the U.S. “could reshape the senseless cataclysm of the Great War into the war that would end war itself.”⁶⁰ The President’s bold ideology shaped these messages and many of the CPI initiatives throughout the war.

Similarly, during much of World War 2, the OWI used the contrasting themes of civilization and barbarism to describe the war as one of good against evil. However, it also made a point to emphasize that only through internationalism was the path to “a better life and a safer world.”⁶¹ Using President Roosevelt’s own words in his famous Four Freedoms Speech, the OWI tried to communicate to the public what it meant to fight for those, as well as other

Figure 1: "Beat back the Hun with Liberty Bonds": American propaganda poster for investment by F. Strothmann c. 1918



Source: Getty Images

⁵⁹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 54.

⁶⁰ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 62.

⁶¹ Susan A Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 88.

freedoms to which all Americans were entitled, emphasizing the vast distinction between what the Allies and the Axis powers stood for. Through the use of a variety of mediums, Roosevelt's

administration also worked to communicate the

Figure 2: The Axis Aim for world domination in *Why We Fight*.



Source:
https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Prelude_to_War

global threat that Germany would become, if the U.S. did not join the fight against the Axis. The well-known film director, Frank Capra worked for the OWI during that time, producing movies about the war. In the first film in his well-known series of movies titled *Why We Fight*, a “graphic is shown in

which the whole world, including the United States, is covered in German swastikas or

Imperial Japanese flags, broadcasting the clear message that if we didn't stop them, they would take us over” (Figure 2).⁶² The CPI and the OWI both created propaganda that showed American audiences what life would be like if the Germans or Axis powers won the wars overseas and drove home the importance of defeating America's enemies for the good of the entire world.

Additionally, the communication strategists from both wars had to show their domestic audience that America, as a world power, had an obligation to protect those nations that were under attack. They distributed atrocity stories from the war and emphasized that if left unchallenged, the enemy had the ability to bring that carnage to the very shores of the U.S.⁶³

During the First World War, the Creel Committee recruited “75,000 local pillars of

⁶² Chad W. Seagren and David R. Henderson, "Why we Fight: A Study of U.S. Government War-Making Propaganda," *The Independent Review*, (2018), 76.

⁶³ Peter Stansky, *The Last Great War*, 76.

communities” to volunteer as “Four Minute Men.”⁶⁴ These performers would entertain moviegoers during the four minutes it took to change film reels; they told stories highlighting German brutality to further justify the reasons for President Wilson’s war to the public and “generate enthusiasm for the war.”⁶⁵ The illustrated art from the Creel Committee was another example of the use of this tactic. Charles Gibson, the head of the Division of Pictorial Publicity, ensured that many of the products that the Committee released were pictures that would “appeal to the heart of the American citizen.”⁶⁶

For every positive image displaying immigrants gaining their U.S. citizenship and experiencing the “Thrill of American liberty” ...there were also multiple posters showing “blood-soaked ‘Huns’ and forlorn American servicemen in graveyards.”⁶⁷ During World War 2, the producers of the widely popular radio series *This is War* also tried to encourage a collective sense of empathy toward the innocent lives being lost overseas. The show sought “to cultivate Americans' compassion for their new allies” and used “sympathetic accounts of the war, heart-wrenching stories of distant suffering scripted to make Americans feel they were morally bound to, and might share the fate of their weary allies.”⁶⁸ By bringing the foreign struggles directly into the living rooms of the American population, the radio series shrunk the globe and prevented its domestic audience from ignoring the violence being enacted on innocent people overseas. In both world wars, the third and final theme of combatting isolationism and proving to Americans that their involvement in conflict was necessary for the future of a peaceful world was a large portion of the communication campaigns.

⁶⁴ Chad W. Seagren and David R. Henderson, “Why we Fight,” 75.

⁶⁵ Chad W. Seagren and David R. Henderson, “Why we Fight,” 76.

⁶⁶ Nick Fischer, “The Committee on Public Information and the Birth of US State Propaganda,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* (2016), 69.

⁶⁷ Nick Fischer, “The Committee on Public Information and the Birth of US State Propaganda,” 69.

⁶⁸ James Spiller, “This is War! Network Radio and World War II Propaganda in America,” *Null* 11, no. 1, 2004, 60.

A Range of Mediums

As both world wars waged on, the American communication experts in charge of generating the “war-will of a nation” had to do more than just change the themes of their messages.⁶⁹ The second key element of their communication campaigns was the use of a wide variety of mediums or tools in order to disseminate information to multiple target audiences. Both presidents’ staffs took advantage of the media innovations at the time and used “elements of drama and new

Figure 3: 1943 *So Proudly We Hail* Movie poster



Source: IMDB.com

technologies” to create “a consensual reality, a reality that fueled a media and entertainment industry that in turn- sometimes subtly, sometimes loudly, manipulated and maintained the illusions within and surrounding the war.”⁷⁰ During a time in history where technology and media activities were rapidly evolving, the Creel Committee and the OWI created new avenues through which to reach certain demographics. Three communication mediums that were used effectively during both wars were entertainment propaganda, the mass news media, and marketing, advertising, and recruiting products.

The first medium, entertainment propaganda, was seen in many different forms throughout both wars – mainly through the motion picture, radio broadcast, and still imagery or graphics (Figure 3). Both Presidents understood the impact of this type of propaganda and the sheer quantity of Americans they could reach through its proper

⁶⁹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 161.

⁷⁰ Nathaniel Lande, *Spinning History: Politics and Propaganda in World War II*, New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2017, 123.

employment. Communication strategists in both wars worked with the assumption that the general public was more accepting of propaganda if it was presented in the form of an entertaining story.⁷¹ Good propaganda influenced people's thoughts and feelings, but truly effective propaganda showed what one should do with those thoughts and feelings.⁷² Through the use of film, radio, and still imagery or graphics, the communication experts in both world wars strove to invoke certain emotions of their target audiences and show them how to act on those emotions.

During the First World War, movies had just started becoming a mainstream form of entertainment. So, the film industry was a natural fit for Creel's communication campaign. He believed that "it was obvious that the motion picture had to be placed on the same plane of importance as the written and spoken word."⁷³ In fact, experts in the film industry were creating war-themed movies well before the government requested to partner with them, "retailing to the public...various incarnations of the American dream and democratic ideals," within which the theme of war fit perfectly.⁷⁴ The CPI realized the value of a film was much greater than other forms of media because the public perceived it as "genuine entertainment rather than federally required viewing."⁷⁵ Films the CPI produced, such as *Pershing's Crusaders*, *Under Four Flags*, and *America's Answer* had motifs that "drove home America's resources and determinations," both domestically and throughout the world.⁷⁶ Moreover, the CPI went above and beyond just producing its own films; experts with the CPI's Division of Films partnered with large film studios to help produce movies that the studio, not the government, released to the public. It was

⁷¹ David Welch and Jo Fox. *Justifying War*, 220.

⁷² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 146.

⁷³ George Creel, *How we Advertised America*, New York u.a: Harper, 1972, 117.

⁷⁴ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 149.

⁷⁵ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 154.

⁷⁶ George Creel, *How we Advertised America*, New York, Harper (1972), 8.

a mutually beneficial partnership. The CPI developed scripts that “would put the government’s message across while also holding the interest of the moviegoers,” and the major motion picture studios collected all of the profits.⁷⁷ Well-recognized studios such as Paramount-Bray Pictograph and Universal created nearly twenty, one-reel films under this agreement.

Similarly, during World War 2, President Roosevelt described movies as one of the most powerful forms of media when “informing and entertaining our citizens” and pronounced that they could be “a very useful contribution to the war effort” following the attacks on Pearl Harbor.⁷⁸ Through the efforts of the OWI, the motion picture industry quickly became just as critical during the war as it was for earlier “policy successes of the Roosevelt administration.”⁷⁹ Through directives and regulations, the OWI ensured that key topics regarding the war from the administration were highlighted throughout the movie theaters.⁸⁰ Filmmakers produced movies that attempted to quell isolationist sentiment and provoke anger toward the Germans and Japanese.⁸¹ Some were more successful at this than others. The creators of some more sensational films, such as *The Hitler Gang* were accused of crossing the line and not adequately portraying the seriousness of the war in Germany. *The Hitler Gang* portrayed the Nazis as a silly, untrained mob as opposed to a serious adversary. Critics accused Hollywood of daring to show the Nazis as a petty “gang that stole a nation” instead of millions of seriously trained men that were fighting, and killing U.S. soldiers.⁸² However, most of the other movies produced in this genre, such as *Casablanca*, *Since You Went Away*, and *Pride of the Marines*, were more balanced and depicted the war “as a serious business where the people you love die, where you

⁷⁷ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 152.

⁷⁸ Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 57.

⁷⁹ Nick Fischer, "The Committee on Public Information and the Birth of US State Propaganda," 71.

⁸⁰ Nick Fischer, "The Committee on Public Information and the Birth of US State Propaganda," 72.

⁸¹ Nick Fischer, "The Committee on Public Information and the Birth of US State Propaganda," 72.

⁸² Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 124.

sacrifice your personal desires for the nation's good, where the enemy is deadly, not dumb, where there is true glory but where victory exacts a price.”⁸³ Regardless of specific reviews, overall motion pictures were an effective medium through which to inform the American public about the war through entertainment.

The second entertainment-based medium the communication professionals used throughout the wars was the radio show. These were mostly seen during World War 2; however, radio shows in the U.S. started becoming popular right before the onset of the First World War. In 1910, Lee De Forest, a well-known radio scientist, “presented the first public radio broadcast of two performances from New York's Metropolitan Opera.”⁸⁴ He also used the radio to broadcast patriotic music to members of the U.S. Navy. Even though the government eventually banned any commercial radio activity throughout the war, “transmitting patriotic songs over the radio played an important role in spreading war propaganda before America entered the war.”⁸⁵ Radio-based propaganda was short lived during the First World War, but it made an impact on the future of this novel medium.

Throughout World War 2, and especially following the attack on Pearl Harbor, radio became an important part of everyday life. More than 80% of Americans owned radios, and this medium became the central tool in sharing wartime news reports and fictional shows with war-time themes to tens of millions of Americans.⁸⁶ Because the radio had the power to convey information and news in nearly real-time, government agencies partnered with network experts to “inform Americans about the war, to impress on them that hostilities bordered on their own

⁸³ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 133.

⁸⁴ “Spreading the American Spirit through the Airwaves,” The United States World War One Centennial Commission, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/technology-spreads-the-word/radio-american-music-ww1.html>.

⁸⁵ “Spreading the American Spirit through the Airwaves,” <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/technology-spreads-the-word/radio-american-music-ww1.html>.

⁸⁶ James Spiller, “This is War!”, 55.

doorsteps, and to urge them to help finance, fight, and produce materiel for global combat.”⁸⁷ In 1942, writer and director Norman Corwin created the series *This is War!*, where he transformed uninspiring facts about the conflict into “a truly global event, one that required all Americans to fervently support their nation’s crusade against a fascist tyranny.”⁸⁸ The series “elevated the country as a reluctant warrior roused to defend human freedom” and set the tone for future radio programs, films, and rallies.⁸⁹ While there was no official study of the public sentiment of the radio series, “the press generally rated the show highly” and the OWI received many requests for transcripts or more information from various groups who had been “emphatically moved by the series.”⁹⁰ President Roosevelt took advantage of a multitude of “opinion-persuading channels” during the war, with his radio “fireside chats” proving to be one of the most impactful.⁹¹

The public certainly flocked to their sets in huge numbers to listen to him. By the start of the 1940s there were 60 million radio receivers throughout the country, which meant that 90 percent of the American people could be reached directly in their homes. Whenever Roosevelt took to the airwaves, more than two-thirds of households would huddle around their radios, anxious to hear the President’s interpretation of the worsening international situation.⁹²

The President was strategic in his use and frequency of his chats and ensured he exploited them deliberately.

He used his opportunities on air for two very specific reasons. Roosevelt would engage in a fireside chat in order to “mobilize opinion behind a specific initiative” and to “drive home the full implications of any change in the external environment, so as to further erode the public complacency” about the war overseas.⁹³ These two reasons for delivering his messages directly into the homes of listeners were important during the

⁸⁷ James Spiller, "This is War! ", 56.

⁸⁸ James Spiller, "This is War! ", 56.

⁸⁹ James Spiller, "This is War! ", 56.

⁹⁰ James Spiller, "This is War! ", 68.

⁹¹ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 31.

⁹² Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 34.

⁹³ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 35.

early years of the war when he needed support for things such as the Land-Lease bill or the arming of merchant boats, as well as later in 1941 when “he used news of the sinking of the USS Greer to denounce the Nazis for piracy...and announce that the U.S. Navy would begin shooting U-boats on sight.”⁹⁴

In 1943, the War Activities Committee (WAC), a part of the OWI, also took to the radio waves to reach the American population. The WAC’s chief of domestic operations, Palmer Hoyt began a program of “War Bulletins,” as a means of quickly delivering information to his domestic audience. These bulletins provided listeners with the latest updates in the war in a timelier manner than other radio programs. They also were a way for the OWI to share information about war support campaigns. They were a “bolt of startling, instantly transmitted information” that featured well-known spokespersons or celebrities calling citizens to support the war effort through the purchase of war bonds or the rejection of patronizing the black market.⁹⁵

The third main entertainment tool that communication experts used to gain support for the wars was in the form of art. Imagery proved to be a valuable and powerful tool in invoking emotion from the public and generating support. Propagandists worked with the notion that an image held its power in its portrayal of real life and when a person viewed a picture of something, there was a connection and a relationship; “in the act of recognition, the images affect the subject and, correspondingly the representation or image is given life by the represented.”⁹⁶ During the First World War, the CPI created nearly 1,500 graphic works of war-

⁹⁴ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 35.

⁹⁵ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 230.

⁹⁶ David Welch and Jo Fox. *Justifying War*, 122.

related art.⁹⁷ Pictorial publicity in the form of combat illustrations and political cartoons was a medium that both administrations used to depict various sides of conflict.

Creel established the Division of Pictorial Publicity when famous “Gibson Girl” artist, Charles Dana Gibson volunteered to contribute to the Committee’s efforts.⁹⁸ Creel tasked him with hiring other well-known artists to produce war-time imagery. Fortunately for Creel and President Wilson, many of the “nation’s best known and highly paid artists and illustrators” were already part of a “patriotic artist group they called the ‘Vigilantes,’ whose purpose had been to oppose neutrality and pacifism well before President Wilson called for war.”⁹⁹ With offices in New York, San Francisco, and other prominent cities, the Division’s mission was to create “the story of war” to call Americans “to patriotism and to service.”¹⁰⁰ Skilled artists were not the only ones contributing to this effort. At the appeal of General John J. Pershing, a group of soldiers were also commissioned as combat illustrators, and their more than three hundred drawings “were exhibited throughout the United States” during the war.¹⁰¹ Both their work and that of the Division of Pictorial Publicity conveyed “the nobility of Woodrow Wilson’s war vision” and attempted to “win the hearts and minds of the American people.”¹⁰² This wartime imagery depicted the conflict as “a new crusade” and mobilized the public’s memory to vindicate and explain military action.¹⁰³

Similarly, during the World War 2, the OWI partnered with other organizations to create and distribute artwork in the form of posters, cartoons, and other graphic work in an effort to

⁹⁷ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 140.

⁹⁸ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 91.

⁹⁹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 138.

¹⁰¹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 146.

¹⁰² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 139.

¹⁰³ David Welch and Jo Fox. *Justifying War*, 8.

“rally the home front and achieve compliance with various program mandates.”¹⁰⁴ These the artistic campaigns fell under the responsibility of the OWI Bureau of Graphics, “which reviewed campaign proposals submitted by other federal agencies, supervised the creation of graphic materials, gave advice on how to solve printing and distribution problems and distributed posters for the OWI.”¹⁰⁵ The topics and themes of artistic work from the First World War differed in many ways from those during the World War 2, as “President Roosevelt preferred more positive imagery that involved citizens and personalized their war efforts.”¹⁰⁶

Images such as frugality, recruitment, defense work, conserving materials, and the importance of buying war bonds were more prevalent than the more common graphic cartoonish-art from the front lines as was seen during the First World War. One of the more well-known images from the time was the famous *I Want You* recruiting poster displaying Uncle Sam calling Americans to defend their nation; during the war there were more than five million copies printed, and it is still recognizable today. Another popular series was Norman Rockwell’s depiction of President Roosevelt’s vision of his *Four Freedoms* (Figure 4). Rockwell’s paintings portraying the freedoms of speech, worship, and the freedoms from want and fear, first were displayed in *The Saturday Evening Post* “and then reproduced as posters by the GPO in 1943 for

Figure 4: Normal Rockwell’s *Four Freedoms* Collection



Source: Normal Rockwell Museum

¹⁰⁴ Terrence H. Witkowski, "World War II Poster Campaigns: Preaching Frugality to American Consumers." *Journal of Advertising* 32, no. 1 (2003), 71.

¹⁰⁵ Terrence H. Witkowski, "World War II Poster Campaigns", 71.

¹⁰⁶ Terrence H. Witkowski, "World War II Poster Campaigns", 72.

the OWI.”¹⁰⁷ Overall, these posters served to reinforce what was already being spoken through the radio waves and shown in movie theaters, and they echoed the call for Americans to serve however they could.

While federally-backed, entertainment-based propaganda was effective in many ways, there was also a general mistrust of the term and a public suspicion of it. This is where the second medium became important – the accounts from the mass media. There are countless studies that show how much mass media shapes public opinion and makes up a large portion of “a nation’s public information system.”¹⁰⁸ The messages shared through mass media can “provide individuals pictures of their social environment, of whether there is social approval or disapproval of their views or actions.”¹⁰⁹

During the two world wars, the news media played an important role in the communication efforts of the political leadership. Two key components of the mass media became important elements of communication plans during both wars: newspaper journalists and censorship. Newspapers, with wide reach, a low cost to produce, and a huge following, quickly became a mainstream source of information about the wars. However, the fear of spies during both wars was rampant, and thus, there had to be agreements in place to protect information that would otherwise harm allied forces.¹¹⁰ The leaders of the wars’ communication efforts were strategic in their use of both newspapers and censorship in order to reinforce and bolster their messaging efforts.

First and foremost, newspapers provided a framework through which battlefield stories (both true and rumored) flourished among the population. Even in the stories that the press left

¹⁰⁷ Terrence H. Witkowski, "World War II Poster Campaigns", 73.

¹⁰⁸ Broom and Sha. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 177.

¹⁰⁹ Broom and Sha. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 176.

¹¹⁰ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 69.

absent in their writing, by “hinting at unspeakable horrors, the press more or less guaranteed that the horrors would be spoken.”¹¹¹ During World War 2, newspapers were one of the main sources of information. The famous correspondent Ernie Pyle alone published work in “more than two hundred daily newspapers and four hundred weeklies” as he told the stories of American soldiers serving overseas.¹¹² And at the very start of his time as president, Roosevelt would hold regular press conferences and welcomed journalists “as gentlemen, not suspected as spies.”¹¹³ Likewise, in the First World War, Creel, as a former reporter himself, created the Division of News that “functioned as a central information bureau” to provide journalists with “authoritative information” about the war.¹¹⁴ During both wars, as well as the interwar period, there was a substantial shift in each of the services’ relationship with the mass media, and both administrations took advantage of it. The service chiefs changed how they viewed and treated journalists – from “propaganda desiring to squelch any positive news” to recognizing journalists “as an avenue for gaining popular support.”¹¹⁵ Communication experts from both wars took advantage of this powerful mass media tool, in order to reach the majority of their domestic audience.

Another element involved in the practice of using mass media was the role, practice, and justification of censorship during both world wars, as part of the Espionage Act of 1917. The Espionage Act was made up of three elements: a “press censorship” condition, which “declared it unlawful for any person...to publish any information that...would be useful to the enemy,” a “disaffection” provision, which “declared it unlawful to...make or convey false reports...with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military,” and lastly, the “nonmailability”

¹¹¹ Peter Stansky, *The Last Great War*, 67.

¹¹² Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men*, University of Nebraska Press (2016), v.

¹¹³ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 31.

¹¹⁴ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 107.

¹¹⁵ Ryan Wadle, *Selling Sea Power*, University of Oklahoma Press (2019), 75.

provision, that “granted the postmaster general authority to exclude from the mails any writing or publication that violates any of the provisions” of the Espionage Act.¹¹⁶ The “press censorship provision provoked the most heated discussion” and it became evident that the President and the courts were distorting the Espionage Act in order to “suppress a broad range of political dissent.”¹¹⁷ The Wilson administration as well as military leaders called for “a hard and fast censorship law that would have put the press in leg irons and hand cuffs,” despite the media and Creel’s arguments against it.¹¹⁸ The administration was accusing of being “un-American” and attempting to “muzzle the press.”¹¹⁹ Almost a month after the initial presentation of the press censorship provision to Congress, on May 31, 1917, “the House defeated the provision by a vote of 184 to 144,,this effectively ended consideration of the press censorship provision for the duration of the war.”¹²⁰ The two other provisions were both heavily amended as well. While Creel did agree there had to be some level of secrecy during a war, he maintained that nothing was more important than the confidence of Americans that “the news should not be impaired.”¹²¹ His alternative was voluntary self-censorship. He proposed that each newspaper act as “its own censor, putting it up to the patriotism and common sense of the individual editor to protect purely military information of tangible value to the enemy.”¹²² Overall, while unpopular in many circles, the Creel committee was able to strike a balance of protecting information that would be of value to the enemy while also upholding the democratic freedoms of speech and the press.

While entertainment propaganda and the mass news media were successful tools in both wars’ communication strategies, the third medium – marketing and advertising products were an

¹¹⁶ Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times*, New York: Norton & Co, 2004, 147

¹¹⁷ Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 146.

¹¹⁸ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 64.

¹¹⁹ Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 147.

¹²⁰ Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times*, 149.

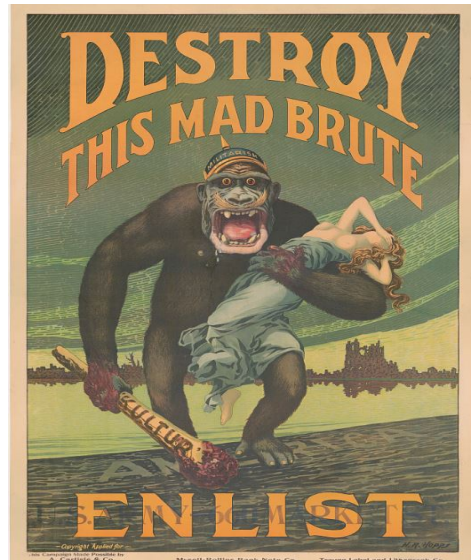
¹²¹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 65.

¹²² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 66.

effective element as well. Both the CPI and OWI took advantage of the business and marketing booms taking place; advertisements and recruiting tools became money-making ventures and enticed the public to either serve directly in the conflict or support from home. They relied heavily on sales and advertising tactics to not just inform the public about the current events of the war, but also to promote sales of things such as war bonds that would help fund the war.¹²³ Two well-known examples of this trend were the Four Minute Men during the First World War and the posters, leaflets, and various products used in recruiting efforts in both wars.

The Division of the Four Minute Men was the biggest propaganda department in the CPI, and a unique element in Creel's plan to gain public support for the war and generate cash flow. Creel recruited "more than 75,000 volunteer speakers" to give "patriotic talks in movie theaters during the four minutes projectionists required to change reels" during films.¹²⁴ Over the course of their performances, they addressed "more than 3 million listeners in every US state and territory" and performed for their crowds on a "stunning range of topics – from the necessity for ship building to heartfelt appeals to knit socks for soldiers."¹²⁵ They were the "core" of Creel's efforts and sold not just war bonds, but also "evoked images of the nation's first citizen army."¹²⁶

Figure 5: "Destroy this mad brute Enlist" - U.S. Army. Propaganda poster shows a terrifying gorilla with a helmet labeled "militarism" holding a bloody club labeled "kultur" and a half-naked woman



Source: Library of Congress

¹²³ Sydney Weinberg, "What to Tell America: The Writers' Quarrel in the Office of War Information," *The Journal of American History* (Bloomington, Ind.) 55, no. 1 (Jun 1, 1968), 81.

¹²⁴ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 94.

¹²⁵ Justin, Nordstrom, "Beyond 'The Bleak and Dismal Shore: The Wartime and Postwar Experiences of American Four Minute Men, 1917–1927," (2014), 305.

Using marketing strategies meant to sell more products, the Four Minute Men appealed to the new universal feeling of patriotism and hatred for the enemy, and were critical in convincing “Americans that sacrifices were necessary if democracy was to survive.”¹²⁷ Ultimately, they were salesmen at heart. Part of the reason they were so effective and thus critical to Creel’s campaign was because the skill set of public speaking was still held in very high regard at this time in America.¹²⁸ There was a common consensus that no film or written product could ever be

Figure 6: "The girl he left behind" is still behind him--She's a WOW / Adolph Treidler, 1886-1981, artist. Poster showing a woman ordnance worker (WOW), holding wrench.



Source: Library of Congress

as impactful as a live presentation, and the Four Minute Men embodied the skills required to communicate an impactful message to a live American audience. In addition to the Four Minute Men efforts, recruiting products were also designed using marketing and advertising practices in both wars. These posters, pamphlets, and billboards did more than encourage enlistment, they strove to bolster the labor force, nurture Victory Gardens, and invest in War Bonds or Liberty Loans. During the First World War, the military branches began to increase “the use of striking visuals while reducing their wording” on recruiting

¹²⁶ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 133.

¹²⁷ Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 3.

¹²⁸ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War*, 90.

billboards and posters.¹²⁹ This new technique was reflective of current trends in advertising. The military started “creating a kind of fantasy world” on their posters, manipulating “images to appeal to potential recruits.”¹³⁰ The themes of these posters displayed a variety of images calling men to serve: businessmen, shedding their coats with a look of determination after reading a headline describing “Hun” atrocities; a giant, grotesque gorilla kidnapping an innocent young woman – a German “brute” that Americans were called to destroy (Figure 5) ; and uniformed men bravely storming a beach, waving rifles with the caption “The Marines Have Landed” written in bold ink across the top of the image. These vivid portrayals of bravery and courage appealed to the fighting-aged American male during this time. Men were not the only target audience of these types of products. During World War 2 and the resulting labor shortage across the U.S., the OWI also developed advertisements directed at women and other members of society that were not fighting on the front lines, but instead supporting the war effort at home. Some marketing products attempted to “redefine and negotiate the meanings of femininity in relation to the definitions of masculine work” in order to encourage more women to take jobs outside of the home.¹³¹ The famous Rosie the Riveter was one of many advertisements that appealed to women to challenge the social norms and help support the fight from factories, shipyards, and mills. Phrases such as “It’s our fight too!” and “The girl he left behind is still behind him!” (Figure 6) adorned posters above images of strong, beautiful women answering the call to serve in the name of America. Both Liberty Loan posters during the First World War and War Bond posters during the World War 2 portrayed “cherished national symbols – images of the Statue of Liberty (Figure 7), Columbia, and Uncle Sam – to stir hearts and open wallets.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Heather P. Venable, *How the Few Became the Proud*, 84.

¹³⁰ Heather P. Venable, *How the Few Became the Proud*, 85.

¹³¹ Philippa Gates, "Home Sweet Home Front Women", 6.

¹³² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 142.

The communication experts in both the CPI and OWI understood that effective propaganda products would have to do more than just show Americans something; they had “to inspire, to move, to urge” the masses to action.¹³³ This pictorial propaganda was a critical medium in both wars communication campaigns.

Multiple Spokespeople

The previous two tactics in the First World War and World War 2 communication strategies - changing themes and the use of a variety of mediums - were critical to the success of the CPI and the OWI, but they were backed up by a third element: a layered communication strategy through the use of multiple spokespeople and experts. This third and final tactic added credibility and resonance to the information the government was distributing. Incorporating perspectives from different demographics with various backgrounds allowed the CPI and the OWI to communicate current events to the members of the public during and following the world wars. The spokespeople were viewed as opinion leaders throughout their respective communities. Public officials and public figures both had various roles that they (knowingly or unknowingly) played in the communication efforts of both world wars.¹³⁴ The communication agencies used both public officials and public figures and took advantage of the resonance of their voices and the sheer volume of their followers.

Figure 7: “You, Buy A Liberty Bond / Lest I Perish” propaganda poster



Source: National Park Service

¹³³ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 141.

¹³⁴ Broom and Sha. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 142-143, 175.

A U.S. public official is defined as someone who is appointed or elected and holds considerable authority over the decisions that affect a community.¹³⁵ These men and women are considered opinion leaders and are “key components of gaining acceptance of new ideas and practices.”¹³⁶ Creel recognized the value of “the verdict of the most influential people” early in the war and adapted this technique to his strategy.¹³⁷ Communication experts intertwined the words of prominent public officials into their campaigns in both timing and subject. Two examples of public officials that commonly spoke out regarding the wars were elected officials and well-known military leaders.

During the wars, both the presidents and their staffs discussed a wide variety of elements of the war strategies with the American public, speaking with the press and at community events in order to gain support (and at times, votes). During the First World War, the Creel Committee did not exist to just sell the war to the press and the public, but to promote Wilson’s very philosophy, making the “Great War” a symbol of the struggle for the hearts and minds of the whole world. The CPI was an instrument to spread the Wilsonian ideology.¹³⁸ President Wilson did not have a robust relationship with the news media, however one exception to this was his relationship with Frank Cobb, a close friend and journalist from the *New York World*. Cobb was a credible source in the news industry due to his ability to make connections with “established public men, principally top political leaders.”¹³⁹ The relationship that Cobb shared with the president was a prime example of this ability, and Cobb became somewhat of an advisor to Wilson during the war. He became almost a publicist for the president in 1917-1918.¹⁴⁰ With Wilson’s trust, Cobb

¹³⁵ Broom and Sha. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 142.

¹³⁶ Broom and Sha. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 175.

¹³⁷ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 47.

¹³⁸ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 81.

¹³⁹ Gerald L. Fetner, “Political Editor and Public Man in the Time of Roosevelt and Wilson: The New York World’s Frank I. Cobb” *American journalism* (2015), 163.

¹⁴⁰ Gerald L. Fetner, “Political Editor and Public Man in the Time of Roosevelt and Wilson,” 180.

showed his commitment to the president through well-researched and direct articles describing the president's intentions during the war, and discrediting those that sought to undermine him. In editorials such as "Vicious and Unconstitutional" and "Secretary Baker's Testimony," Cobb used his platform to communicate Wilson's war to the masses as well as speak out against censorship and the suppression of war hysteria.

In addition to the president, Creel coordinated speaking opportunities with other prominent, elected leaders throughout the war. In advance of the opening of the CPI film *Pershing's Crusaders*, Creel sent "personal telegrams to thirty men he identified as the city's most prominent community leaders" to request their support in promoting the film.¹⁴¹ This tactic of not communicating to the majority, but instead "appealing to the small minority of tastemakers to whom the masses looked for guidance" was an effective public relations approach.¹⁴² Elected community leaders helped share the information about the film as well as other CPI messaging efforts throughout the war.

Likewise, during World War 2, President Roosevelt was very sensitive to the "each and every ebb and flow in the popular mood" and had a firm understanding that a "wide consensus was essential" during the war.¹⁴³ Thus, he often engaged the press and was highly adept at communicating directly to the American public, doing so directly via radio in his addresses and "fireside chats."¹⁴⁴ On the topic of neutrality, the President "rejected Woodrow Wilson's example of twenty five years earlier and failed to ask Americans to be neutral" and would use "more indirect channels to convey his own increasingly 'un-neutral' thoughts."¹⁴⁵ He would

¹⁴¹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 153.

¹⁴² Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 153.

¹⁴³ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 97.

¹⁴⁴ Murphy M. Dennis and James F. White, "Propaganda: Can a Word Decide a War?" *Parameters* (Carlisle, Pa.) 37, no. 3 (Sep 22, 2007b): 15.

¹⁴⁵ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 36.

often have conversations “off the record” with public officials and news reporters, making his thoughts on Nazi-ism well known. Roosevelt would also use more “vocal opponents of Hitler” within his organization to assist in carrying this message.¹⁴⁶ Other public officials that held lesser positions in government were powerful tools in the Roosevelt’s campaigns. Members of the president’s staff, such as Harold L. Ickes, the secretary of the interior and Henry Morgenthau, Jr. the secretary of the treasury, were both vocal and aggressive, sharing the president’s desire to publicly communicate an abhorrence to the Nazis. Both Roosevelt and the OWI would often use the public remarks of other voted officials in order to drive their communication campaigns.

Military leaders were another example of public officials that spoke out in support of certain elements of each of the wars. The press or other public forums quoted various high ranking officers expressing their opinions of the views or decisions of the policymakers. In 1917, Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels created the first Navy News Bureau in order to “liaise with the CPI” and “shape the material released to the public.”¹⁴⁷ Daniels brought in a team of Navy experts as well as civilian newspapermen, and the CPI paid their salaries. The Navy News Bureau and Daniels himself, worked closely with the CPI to issue “press releases about the Navy’s activities during the war” and provide transcripts of all of Daniels’ speaking engagements.¹⁴⁸

The invention of the Bureau and the CPI’s close partnership with Daniels helped spread the message about the Navy’s convoy and antisubmarine missions during the war and further promote the President’s own messaging efforts. Another example from the First World War was how Creel capitalized on the fame of retired commander of the “Great White Fleet”, Admiral George Dewey. Dewey often publicly expressed his support for the war, and the Creel

¹⁴⁶ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 36.

¹⁴⁷ Ryan Wadle. *Selling Sea Power*, 20.

¹⁴⁸ Ryan Wadle. *Selling Sea Power*, 21.

Committee created opportunities to publicize his remarks.¹⁴⁹ Specifically, he worked with the CPI to counter the sensationalism surrounding the president's decisions regarding military defense spending. Critics of the war publicly disapproved of the cost of coastal defenses and other initiatives that were part of what some people considered an attempt to manufacture hysteria. Creel worked with "the old hero" to counter the accusations with facts; Dewey offered his "authoritative support" for defense spending and backed up Wilson's measures of preparedness.¹⁵⁰ Both Navy leaders were predominant figures in Creel's information campaigns.

During World War 2, military officials also spoke out in support of President Roosevelt's efforts - specifically when it came to issues of the budget. Multiple "military leaders testified to Congress regarding the need for a large army, pointing out that a force of "8.2 million...was essential if planned operations were to be successful."¹⁵¹ General George Marshall, a member of the newly established Joint Chiefs of Staff publicly supported Roosevelt's efforts to focus on Germany before Asia during the war. When it came to "combatting the 'Asia-first' campaign," Marshall would assist the President in releasing statements, praising General MacArthur's "tremendous and remarkably efficient bombardments" in the European theater.¹⁵²

Aside from public officials, public figures also played an influential role in garnering domestic support for the war. Individuals who "invite attention and comment and thus voluntarily expose themselves" to public interest are considered public figures.¹⁵³ People such as athletes, scholars, community influencers, and actors held great sway with large groups of private citizens, and the leading communication experts knew it. When building his staff, Creel "always aimed to recruit the best, the brightest, and the most widely respected" – not just for

¹⁴⁹ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 47, 51.

¹⁵⁰ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 51.

¹⁵¹ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 99.

¹⁵² Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 100.

¹⁵³ Broom and Sha. *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations*, 142.

their talents and expertise but because “they were the most influential people in their line of work” and the widely recognized “arbiters of public opinion and sentiment.”¹⁵⁴ One of the most important of these influential people was Guy Stanton Ford. In 1917, prior to being recruited for the CPI, Ford was the Dean of Graduate school at the University of Minnesota and an expert in the country and culture of Germany. Creel named Ford to direct the newly established Division of Civil and Educational Cooperation, where he and two other prominent professors in History and Journalism, took to the task of recruiting and coordinating “the work of scores of scholars from all over the United States” and led a “phenomenon of academic publishing.”¹⁵⁵ One of their first critical pieces of work was a pamphlet titled “The War Message and the Facts Behind It,” which translated President Wilson’s declaration of war from April 2, 1917. Creel wanted Wilson’s war declaration to be more widely read and for the American people to understand the “intellectual, spiritual, and emotional justification for going to war.”¹⁵⁶ The government printed more than two million copies of “The War Message” and its popularity launched a publishing program that eventually went on to issue “75 million items in the space of one and a half years.”¹⁵⁷ Through engaged coordination with a myriad civic groups and a network of academic organizations, Ford’s team went on to create many more influential publications, and inspire and educate community leaders about the ongoing war and Wilsonian ideology, until after the end of the armistice.

Similarly, during the final year of World War 2, the OWI partnered with the entertainment leaders to produce the “Four Freedoms War Bond Show,” which traveled across the country to promote the sale of war bonds. Celebrities such as Kate Smith and the cast from the musical

¹⁵⁴ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 139.

¹⁵⁵ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 160.

¹⁵⁶ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 161.

¹⁵⁷ Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 162.

Oklahoma! promoted the New York War show, resulting in the sale of more than \$13 million in war bonds.¹⁵⁸ More than 450 celebrities participated in the show across the country, resulting in the sale of more than \$133 million in bonds.¹⁵⁹ Americans responded well to the “combination of a good cause with star-studded entertainment.”¹⁶⁰ The messaging behind the president’s Four Freedoms and the encouragement to buy war bonds quickly spread across the country through this campaign.

Conclusion

While a communication strategy for a future great war will look different than the two previous due to the changing character in war, advancements in technology, and access to information, the communication organizations and tactics from both wars have laid out the basic fundamentals of a successful future information management campaign. Both world wars showed that in a total war with a peer-adversary, the United States must establish a unified messaging front. Like the CPI with George Creel at its helm and the OWI with Elmer Davis, leading the efforts, a government organization with the focus of managing information regarding the war, will need a cast of solid leaders and a diverse team of communication, marketing, recruiting, and public relations professionals. Not only will the structure and organization have to be well-thought out, but more importantly the tactics of their communication efforts must remain highly adaptable, keenly responsive, and above all credible. Shifting key messages and themes as the nature of the war changes, using multiple mediums to reach various target audiences and stakeholders, and developing a vast array of trustworthy, prominent spokespeople – that are not just well known but also well-versed in the myriad elements of combat operations, are all key elements of an effective communication campaign. When applied today, those same

¹⁵⁸ Susan A Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 121.

¹⁵⁹ Susan A Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 121.

¹⁶⁰ Susan A Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 122.

three components will be key to gaining and maintaining public support, especially if the nature of the war is total, affecting all parts of society and the American way of life.

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