

Abstract

There is no shortage of scholarship on the press during World War II. Almost all of it, however, focuses on censorship or biographies of war correspondents. The interaction between the military commander and the media draws far less attention. Yet the relationship existed. As historian Paul Fussell observed "[t]o read widely in the wartime correspondence exchanged by persons of high rank and important position [during World War II] is to find that about one-third of their attention is devoted to matters of publicity and 'credit.'"¹ Currently, however, there is no scholarship that examines how U.S. military commanders interacted with the press. I am applying for the Original Work Grant (OWG) to fund research for my doctoral dissertation titled, *Total Coverage: How the Media Shaped Total War*, which attempts to take the historical literature on war reporting in a new direction. The dissertation argues that the military and the media forged a relationship during World War II, that saw the military using the media as a weapon, but also caused the press to shape military decision-making in significant ways. Specifically, I am applying for the OWG to fund a research trip to the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene Kansas. This trip is necessary for the completion of this project since the library's archive contains many never-before published documents from Eisenhower and several of his commanders.

¹ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 156.

Narrative

During World War II media considerations often entered into the decision-making of Allied commanders. Media pressure led Franklin D. Roosevelt and General George C. Marshall to order General Douglas MacArthur to escape the beleaguered Philippines in 1942 and, by doing so, reshaped the Allied command structure in the Pacific War.² Public opinion for an offensive somewhere against Germany convinced both Winston Churchill and Roosevelt to launch an invasion of North Africa in 1942.³ Negative media attention by the British press against American troops in the Battle for Sicily goaded General George S. Patton Jr. and General Omar N. Bradley to attack toward Palermo and then Messina to gain recognition for American soldiers in the international press.⁴ When Churchill continued to push for operations in the Balkans instead of a cross-channel landing in France, Roosevelt countered that American public opinion would not allow him to agree.⁵ Once a landing in France was decided on, Churchill chose General Bernard Law Montgomery over General Harold Alexander to lead the ground forces, partly because Monty was better known to the Allied public.⁶ Meanwhile in the Pacific, the Allies agreed on a two-pronged advance on Japan, in part, to avoid the public relations crisis of sidelining MacArthur.⁷

Beginning with these few examples, my dissertation reconstructs the decision-making process of Allied generals and admirals during World War II and endeavors to answer how much media and public opinion shaped what was done on the battlefield. The tentative argument is that the military saw the value of the media during World War II and attempted to use it as a weapon. This often took the form of intelligence operations when the hope was that the Axis would be deceived by fake news stories. Many

² William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur*, New Laurel ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1978), 286.

³ Omar Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 119; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Strategy and Compromise* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), 38-39.

⁴ Bradley and Blair, *A General's Life*, 192 and 196.

⁵ Kent R. Greenfield, *American Strategy in World War II: A Reconsideration* Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 1963), 17.

⁶ Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War*, vol. 5, *Closing the Ring*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), 424-425.

⁷ Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), xiii.

generals also saw the press as useful in improving their soldier's morale. Yet at the same time the power of the press also began shaping the military's actions on the battlefield. An example of this came as the battle for North Africa came to an end in 1943 and General Bradley learned that the final assault would be made with only British soldiers. Bradley immediately visited Eisenhower and stated that American press and public opinion would never tolerate U.S. troops not being present when the Axis forces in North Africa surrendered. Eisenhower agreed and the Axis surrendered to both Allies a short time later.⁸ This is simply one example of Eisenhower making an operational decision that had little military purpose, but made perfect media sense.

This argument is important for four specific reasons. First, the military-media relationship formed during the war not only still directly shapes current conflicts, but was part of a long-term trend in the creation of "total war." The idea of total war--defined here as the complete mobilization of a country for war--had its roots during the French Revolution around the same time as the "Communications Revolution" created modern journalism. Throughout the 19th century the growth of warfare paralleled the growth and power of the media. The total war of the Second World War saw the media and the military in an extremely close relationship. Yet it was also the last total war and the ideal of the military-media relationship never changed to fit subsequent "limited wars." Today, the press tends to judge conflicts after 1945 by the yardstick of World War II, while the military feels betrayed when the press attacks them and wistfully remembers the days when the press was on "our side." In hindsight, both long for the strategic and moral clarity of World War II. Second, the Allied media-military relationship explores a new angle of what Churchill called the "Grand Alliance." Grand though the alliance between Britain and the United States was it also had problems, and tensions were often played out in the press. The British media's vocal cry to have Eisenhower replaced by Montgomery as land force commander in the last year of the war came close to causing a serious command crisis of Eisenhower resigning and Montgomery being fired. Thus, the press helped hold the alliance together, but also threatened to rend it apart. Third, this

⁸Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Random House, 1951), 56-59.

dissertation shows a previously overlooked angle of how military decision-making is influenced. Finally, this project links cultural and operational history together by demonstrating how private civilians and public opinion can influence battlefield actions, normally viewed as the domain of military professionals. My dissertation will be a contribution to the historiography of each of these four fields.

Despite the amount of scholarship on war reporting no account examines the media's effect on military decision-making during World War II. Indeed, most of the books on the media during the war focus on reporters and their experiences, rather than how the military interacted with them. There are a few exceptions. Colonel Barney Oldfield gave his experience as one of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's Public Relations (PR) officers in a memoir titled, *Never a Shot in Anger*.⁹ George H. Roeder, Jr.'s *The Censored War* traces how the military attempted to control the imagery of warfare and thus the attitude of the American public, which he concludes they mostly failed to accomplish.¹⁰ The closest book to this project's topic and argument however, comes in historian Steven Casey's *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany*. Casey examines how Roosevelt attempted to harness public opinion, but also how public opinion shaped his actions on Grand Strategy. However, Casey concludes that public opinion formed Roosevelt's decisions only slightly and usually simply confirmed what he already believed.¹¹ Yet, Casey's attention on the president and public opinion is different from my dissertation's attention on military commanders and the press. Casey only focuses on one national leader making grand strategy, while this project looks at many military officers whose decisions on strategy and operations are much more susceptible to press consideration. With the lack of scholarship in this field this dissertation will therefore, be contributing to societies understanding of World War II.

⁹ Oldfield, Barney. *Never a shot in Anger* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1956), ix.

¹⁰ George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience during world War Two* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 155.

¹¹ Casey, Steven *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 218.

To complete this project requires traveling to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene Kansas. The archive there contains not only the personal papers of General Eisenhower, but many of his subordinates during the war. These include the press conferences of the commander of the 6th Army Group General Jacob L. Devers (Reel 3); the diary and papers of First Army Commander General Courtney Hodges (boxes 6, 23, 24, and 25); the papers of Eisenhower's Chief-of-Staff Walter Bedell Smith which contain the cable traffic from Eisenhower's headquarters (boxes 1-34); while the papers of Eisenhower's naval aid and unofficial PR officer Harry C. Butcher hold his unedited diary (boxes 6-15); likewise the papers of Eisenhower's official PR officers Thor Smith and Justus Baldwin Lawrence are located at the archive (Smith boxes 1, 3, and; Lawrence Box 2). None of these documents have been published in print or on-line and are vital for the completion of this project.

I plan to travel to Abilene from March 11 to March 16, 2018, over Ohio University's spring break. The nearest airport is located at Kansas City Missouri. From there, I will rent a car and drive to Abilene. Traveling on Sunday and leaving late Friday will allow me to complete five days of research at the archive.

In summation, this project is an important contribution to our understanding of how World War II was fought. Likewise, it adds a new explanation for how the Grand Alliance was held together during the war and what threatened to make it fail. Finally, it contributes to historians understanding of how the media developed parallel to total war and created a model for military-media relations. It is this model that still frames the military-media relationship even in today's era of limited war. The OWG money will go to filling this gap in the literature and the completion of my dissertation, which I hope to later publish as a book.

Literature Cited

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Spector, Ronald H. *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*. New York: The Free Press, 1985.

Budget

Expenses	Cost	Source of Funds
Roundtrip Flight Ticket from Columbus, Ohio, to Kans City, Missouri	\$389.00 Approx.	OWG
Hotel Cost for Five Days	\$60.35 x 5=\$301.75	OWG
Car Rental	\$395.84	Eienhower Foundation Travel Grant
Gas	\$0.535 per mile x 345 miles=\$184.57	Eisenhower Foundation Travel Grant
Meals at \$20 Per Day	\$120.00	Eisenhower Foundation Travel Grant; Remainder of OWG (\$59.25)
Total Amount Requested from GSS	\$750.00	
Total Estimated Amount:	\$1,391.16	

Budget Justification

Air Travel: To get to Abilene Kansas from Columbus, Ohio, the cheapest way to travel is by air to Kansas City, Missouri. The estimated roundtrip cost is \$389.00. This figure is taken from a Delta economy flight calculated by Google Flights. This will consume approximately half of the OWG funds.

Rental Car: Kansas City is approximately 161 miles away from Abilene Kansas. For this trip and to commute back and forth from the hotel to the archive a rental car is required. The average rental cost for six days is estimated at \$395.84. This is the estimated price for an economy car out of the Alamo Car Renting Service at Kansas City International Airport. This expense will be covered by a grant from the Eisenhower Foundation.

Gas: The price for gas has been estimated at \$0.535 per mile as according with Ohio University standards. With an estimated 322 miles traveling to and from Abilene and Kansas City Air Port and another twenty-three miles going back and forth from the Super 8 and the archives-2.3 miles distance- the total estimated mileage comes to 345 miles for the entire trip. This comes to \$184.57 for the entire trip. This expense will be covered by a grant from the Eisenhoer Foundation.

Accommodation: I plan to stay at the Super 8 Hotel in Abilene K:ansas. The hotel is located 2.3 miles from the archive and is reasonably priced. Accommodation costs will be covered by the OWG fund.

Meals: Food is generally inexpensive in Abilene. To defray the cost of meals I will buy the ingrediency for sandwiches so I can bring my lunch to the archives each day and eat breakfast at the hotel. I estimate that meals will average at \$20 per day. This expense will be covered by the Eisenhower Foundation Grant. Likewise, the estimated remaining \$59.25 of the OWG funds will be added to the food expense.

Sources of Funding: As can be seen above the OWG money will only cover a part of the expense for this trip. To defray the other costs, I am applying for the Eisenhower Foundation Grant which

will hopefully cover the remaining balance. If I am unsuccessful in obtaining either the OWG or the Eisenhower Foundation grants I will cover the remaining expense out of my own pocket.

Curriculum Vitae Removed to Maintain Applicant Privacy

Glossary

Grant Strategy: Large scale military planning by states often involving non-military resources such as economics, geography, etc.

Historiography: The scholarly literature surrounding a historical debate.

Operations: Military actions that fall between realms of strategy and tactics.

Operational History: The Study of military operations that fall between strategy and tactics. Operational History is a subset of Military History focusing mainly on battles.

Public Relations Officer: Military position that handles reporters and the military's image.