

HOW TO SELL A WAR

WORLD WAR II

World War II Started at 8:00 AM - Hawaiian time, December 7, 1941. Goals for the defeat of Japan were announced by President Roosevelt on December 7, 1941, and reinforced on the dais at a joint session of Congress on December 8, 1941. This goal was the defeat on Japan, and when Germany and Italy declared war on America a few days later, the goal was changed to include the defeat of those countries as well. Enormous resources were devoted to the war effort, and enormous sacrifices were demanded of ALL Americans. The enemy was three powerful industrialized nations, who ideologically and physically had the capacity to rule the world, if the United States and other allies failed to devote all available resources to their defeat. This had been proven by the demonstrated capacity of those nations to conquer all nations who stood in their way.

The war in the Pacific turned in the United States' favor at the Battle of Midway, June 6 through June 9, 1942, six months after Pearl Harbor. From this point on, the defeat of Japan became inevitable, reducing its navy to a force unable to project power, and with a primary capability only to defend the Japanese Islands against invasion by sea.

By 1944, Italy had been defeated, and Germany had lost its last-ditch effort to turn the tide of the war back in their favor or at least to a point where the USA and its Allies would want to sue for peace. The German Defeat ensured that America and its world wide coalition allies would win the war against all combatant countries. From December 7, 1941 until VJ Day on September 2, 1945, America was a combatant for three years, eight months, and 23 days.

THE WAR ON TERROR

The War on Terror started at 8:48 AM, New York City time on September 11, 2001. President Bush was immobilized while reading a children's book in Florida. He flew around the country for a day, Nebraska one hour, Colorado the next. He managed to get to Congress a few days later, and declared a nebulous Global War on Terror, sought a Congressional Authorization on the Use of Force, the Patriot Act, changes to the FISA law, and announced no goal, other than a promise to end terrorism. This is a near-impossible goal, because terrorism can come from anywhere at anytime by anyone. The attackers were a ragtag bunch of people led by an old man who is on kidney dialysis, and who hides in caves. Some leader. Their numbers at the time were probably in the hundreds, world wide, certainly not more than a few thousand.

In 2002, the United States defeated the weak military forces of the Taliban in Afghanistan with 20,000 American troops, total control of the air and the help of some friendly allies in a few months. This could have been the turning point of the War on Terror, had the American Command in Washington not ordered that American Troops stand down, and turn the job of capturing or killing Osama bin Laden to Afghan mercenaries who first took money from the American commanders, then took money from the forces of Osama bin Laden to allow his escape. Thus by bad leadership, the turning point was permitted to slip away. The 10th Mountain Division of the United States Army, and our Special Forces would not have permitted the turning point of the war to escape. All American soldiers ever want to do is finish the job and come home.

The United States decided to divert military resources, manpower and money away from the capture of Osama bin Laden, which would have been the turning point of the war. Instead, their attention was diverted to Iraq, a nation that, while it supported terrorism in the form of rewarding Palestinian Suicide Bomber's families and other incidents, it was not connected to Osama bin Laden's organization, al Qaeda in any meaningful fashion.

The war against Iraq was won quickly against a force that was defeated before it started, because of the massive firepower and capability advantage by the United States and its only meaningful ally in the "coalition of the willing". The peace and security after the war were destroyed by failed leadership in Washington, and their failure to accept advice from their military commanders concerning force size necessary to secure cities, facilities, infrastructure, and institutions. This incompetence was buttressed by an incompetent and corrupt Coalition Provisional Authority, which was responsible for the Occupation and general governance while the Iraqi government was re-formed to permit resumption of Iraqi control of the nation.

Instead, the nation drifted to decay, chaos and Civil War. By incompetence, failure to guard weapons caches, whose locations were known to Iraqi factions. The Iraqi Army was dissolved, all 400,000 members, and the soldiers were permitted to keep their weapons. The weapons were primarily former Soviet AK-47's which is a superior grade of military carbine with full automatic firing capability. This weapon has the ability to deliver high velocity rounds from long range.

In the war the on Terror, the theater of operations moved to Iraq, and the coalition failed to secure the country because of bad leadership in Washington. Iraq became the premier training ground for al Qaeda, and increased the visibility of Osama bin Laden, and raised his mythical status among Middle Easterners.

The American policy of torture, ordered from Washington, by the civilian leadership, prosecuted by American Intelligence services, and coerced American Soldiers, became the recruiting posters for the increase of terrorists throughout the region. This created a massive increase in the training of terrorists, and setting our military up as targets of this venom. The active war against Iraq cost about 120 American soldiers their lives. The death toll of American military personnel has ballooned to over 2300 in the intervening three years since the Iraq invasion in March of 2003.

The Iraqi civil war, which has been ongoing since sometime in 2004, is heating up, due to long-known divisions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and shows no sign of abating. Recently, gasoline has been thrown on the fire, because of the destruction of a Shiite holy site which has been in existence since about the year 800. It is completely unrealistic that this massive desecration of a holy site will to go unavenged. In the meantime, American soldiers continue to die with alarming frequency, and no end in sight. There is no light at the end of the tunnel, not even a train approaching from the other direction.

In World War II, the complete defeat of all of the enemies of the United States and its coalition of allies was inevitable approximately three years after the beginning of hostilities. In the American Civil War, the turning point took place in 1863 at Gettysburg, approximately two years after the start of hostilities. In World War I, the turning point happened when 3 Million American soldiers arrived and turned the tide of the 3 year long stalemate. The war was over about one year later.

Our Revolutionary War turned after about 3 years. The War on Terror, which has a start date of September 11, 2001, has now gone on for four and one-half years, and the beginning of the war is not over yet. Nearly everything associated with the War on Terror has gone wrong. The leadership in Washington has miscalculated the response of war survivors, Insurgents to our leadership, Civil warriors in reality. The administration in Washington has ignored advice from the best experts in the world, and has attempted to create illusion of victory by a massive world-wide propaganda campaign. This campaign bombards Americans primarily, but includes Iraqis, and many other countries, all in an effort to justify continued incompetence.

3 years, 8 months in WW II, versus 4 years, 6 months, two open-ended, goalless occupations, marred by insurgencies, or more plainly, Civil War, and the prospect of another war looming, not because of a specific threat, but by the intentional generation of hatred and fear. The mechanism of a campaign to create a war will be discussed below.

PROPAGANDA

“Propaganda seeks to represent part of the facts, to distort their relations, and to force conclusions which could not be drawn from a complete and candid survey of all of the facts.” President Calvin Coolidge to the Association of Newspaper Editors, Washington – Date not in source – *Keep the Home fires Burning* – Page 1.

An attempt to distract from a failure to plan, a failure to take control of the situation because of bad on-going leadership from Washington, is taking the form of an effort to create war fever against Iran. Iran is taking a belligerent stand against America, most likely because America has taken a belligerent stand against Iran. In 2002, Iran was identified as a target by the President of the United States declaring it a to be a member of an "Axis of Evil. The process of demonizing Iran began four years ago and now is reaching a crescendo of war fever by the propaganda apparatus in Washington.

The outline of a process to generate a propaganda campaign for war, according to Harold D. Lasswell in his landmark book, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, published in 1927 follows. This book is the definitive work on propaganda in English. The book and others identified below provide a methodology to create, and sustain public support to both start, and maintain public support for a long war. The techniques identified here and more are in use on a daily basis in America, both to support an on-going war effort and what appears to be an attempt to widen the locus of the war to cover an incursion into Iran. The methods of a war propaganda effort will be identified below. The reader must draw his own conclusions regarding whether this describes an on-going propaganda campaign.

PROPAGANDA ORGANIZATION

The nature of propaganda lies essentially in its simplicity and repetition. Only the man who is able to reduce the problems to the simplest terms and has the courage to repeat them indefinitely in the simplified form, despite the objection of the intellectuals, will in the long run achieve fundamental success in influencing public opinion. Goebbels Diary – 29 January 1942 – From *Keep the Home Fires Burning* – Page i

The first item is to have a proper organization dedicated to creating and spreading propaganda. The goal of propaganda is to influence public opinion in the direction the propagandist wishes to take it. The thesis of Mr. Lasswell's book is essentially the use of propaganda to create the conditions which will support war, and then to keep support going throughout the conflict. The current administration in Washington has this organization in place.

The organization's public face is the White House Press office. Its source is the political operatives and machine created by the political party of the individual in power at the White House. This back room organization, which includes the national and state party organization, selected reliable members of Congress, and others are capable of delivering a message over hundreds of channels, or even thousands of channels since the advent of the internet. This organization includes friendly news organizations, think tanks and their considerable internet presence and access to massive sources of funds and opinion leaders in the press. This includes talk radio, all without the ability to detect the fingerprints of the White House or its counterpart in the Vice President's office. So, an organization capable of spreading a message far and wide is in place and running very efficiently.

WAR GUILT AND AIMS

"So great are the psychological resistances to war in modern nations that every war must appear to be a war of defence against a menacing, Murderous aggressor. There must be no ambiguity about whom the public is to hate. The war must not be due to a world system of conducting international Affairs, nor to the stupidity or malevolence of all governing classes, but to the rapacity of the enemy. Guilt and guilelessness must be assessed geographically, and all guilt must be on the other side of the frontier. If the propagandist is to mobilize the hate of the people, he must see to it that everything is circulated which establishes the sole responsibility to the enemy. . . ." *Propaganda Technique* – Page 47.

The second principle put forward by Lasswell is the establishment in assigning War Guilt to a nation, citing aggressiveness, war preparations on their side, making the target nation appear threatening beyond its ability to threaten.

The next task, once guilt has been assigned, is to create a message about what the aims of a war with the nation which has been identified as a guilty of a threat. In Iraq, the guilt was assigned to the leadership in the form of the Baath party, which was the only political party, and specifically the national leader, Saddam Hussein.

The specific threats ascribed to Iraq were the ability to manufacture and deliver Weapons of Mass Destruction" (WMD) including Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC in USA military training jargon). The actual buildup of this guilt making was started around 1990, by books, articles and the like. This was reinforced in the 1991 war with Iraq which was intended and executed, to liberate Kuwait and its oil reserves from Iraq, which first attacked, defeated and Annexed Kuwait. A massive international coalition defeated Iraq, but did not depose the Iraqi leadership. This task was outside the scope of the authority granted by the United Nations.

In the two years after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attack on American targets, propagandistic guilt by Saddam Hussein's regime was established in Iraq, partially by creating linkage between 9/11 and the leader of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, which turned out to be a false allegation . An approximation of war fever was generated, and exploited by the American national leadership. Source 9/11 Commission report.

Let's turn our attention to Iran. The motivation to attack Iran probably began in 1979, when a sick dictator, who was supported by the United States, was deposed while in the United States for cancer treatment. He died shortly thereafter. The takeover and 400 day holding of hostages at the American embassy was the signal event of the takeover of the country by a group of radical clerics. The propaganda ante was upped by the designation of Iran as a member of the Axis of Evil in 2002.

SATANISM OR DEMONIZE THE ENEMY

The next step in this process is to demonize the nation, and this usually takes the form of demonizing a single individual. This was successfully achieved in the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars by demonizing the easy target of President Saddam Hussein. The nation of Iraq was seldom identified, as the identification of a people who generally do not cause trouble or have significant enmity is a poor target of a propaganda campaign because of a general apprehension of people to paint an entire nation with a broad brush. Therefore, a devil must be designated. In the case of Iraq, Saddam Hussein was an easy target.

The demonization campaign against Saddam Hussein was hugely successful, and it had its roots at least 13 years before the 2003 war. (See *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis*, by Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie – 1990.) This process can also be found to have been used against Germany by the British prior to World War I, and is described best in *the Keep the Home Fires Burning*, a book by Allen Lane, published in 1977, which examines World War I propaganda from a British perspective. This book is a classic in the literature of war propaganda as well. The anti-German propaganda effort began before 1900, and had a successful outcome in 1914. Thus, the propaganda effort against a specific nation can be decades long, and after a long time of fermenting, a major push to pop the cork usually results in war fever against the nation judged to be the guilty, miscreant party, and the national willingness to wage the war is established.

'The populace caught war fever. In every capital they clamoured for war. . . . On Monday afternoon, I walked with Mr. Asquith to the House of Commons to hear Grey's famous speech. The crowd was so dense that no car could drive through it. . . . It was distinctly a pro-war demonstration. I remember observing at the time: 'These people are very anxious to send our poor soldiers to face death; how many of them will ever go into battle themselves?' It was an unworthy doubt about the courage and patriotism of the demonstrators. A few days later recruiting stands were set up in the Horse Guards Parade, and that great open space beheld a crowd of young men surging around these stands and pushing their way through to give their names for enlistment in the Kitchener Armies. D. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol 1, pp. 64-5 Transcribed from *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, ellipses from the book.

The devil has not been clearly identified in Iran yet, but the Mullahs (pronounced MOO-Lahs) or the current president of Iran are likely candidates.

THE ILLUSION OF VICTORY

Once war begins, the combatants on both sides are faced with the problem of keeping those at home in support of the war effort. This can take the form of flag waving, war bond drives, military recruitment drives, and the promise of a short and successful war. When the conflict drags on, in the face of false expectations created by the propaganda machine, the propagandist task becomes one of convincing the nation that the other belligerent was especially prepared for war, they are performing atrocities, had phantom divisions, no matter if it is true or not. They have a pack of spies at home, stealing our plans, and being prepared for battle in a way that they would not if the spies are not there. Promised quick victory becomes, "It is a hard, tough slog".

The other technique is to present the Illusion of Victory, or to create the impression that good things are happening, and that the near future will bring some breakthrough, say, winning a battle, or causing a retreat, or after the major fighting is done, saying that an election is coming and that this will cause some miracle to occur, as everyone will be happy, put down their weapons and live in bliss ever after. This seems to be the situation in Iraq right now. In Viet Nam, the ruse of meaningless elections was used as well to present the illusion of victory.

Just as important in creating the illusion of victory is the sugar coating bad news. This is the presentation and widespread distribution of good news. In Iraq, the good news generally presents itself in the form of elections, of which there have been three. These events generally scheduled around political events of note in the United States, for instance, one election was just prior to the State of the Union Address, and a purple-fingered woman was trotted out, introduced by the President, and everyone was told what a wonderful thing that an election in Iraq is. Of course the woman voted absentee in America. This was the lasting impression of that address, not the glossed-over fact that the civil war was raging, but was downgraded for public consumption to an “insurgency” against the new order in Iraq and against the American occupiers, who were being billed as “liberators”.

Another propagandist technique associated with the delivery of bad news is the hoarding of good news, which is easy to do in an environment where access to news is restricted by censorship, and the bad news is leavened by the release of a good story or two. This practice was developed and somewhat perfected in WW I by Winston Churchill.

In WW I, the United States had a “Committee of Public Information” led by Mr. George Creel. Here is a summary by Mr. Creel:

“Thirty odd booklets were printed in several languages. Seventy-five million copies were circulated in America and many millions were circulated abroad. . . . The Four Minute Men commanded the volunteer services of 75,000 speakers, operating in 5200 communities, and making a total of 755,190 speeches. . . .” *Technique*, P. 211.

This shows the concept of channeling, or getting the message out over multiple channels. This is an effective means to broadcast the message as intended by the propagandist. After the war started, the Creel operation was fundamentally charged with providing good news, widely distributed, and creating the illusion of victory.

PRESERVING FRIENDSHIP

The next task of the propaganda operation in war is to keep your allies and their people on your side. It is also used by belligerents to keep neutrals on the sideline, and not to join the war effort, unless it is on your side. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, and it generally involves flattery, cajoling, planting stories, and the like. It also involves the cultivation of economic ties that are difficult to observe by a common person not skilled in the ways of intergovernmental finance.

Prior to the United States entry in WW I, American banking interests had huge loans to the British, and they supported entering the war to protect their investment in British war making. Thus, the banking community became vocal voices in the push to joining the European war on the side of the British, when the time came.

In the second Iraqi war, the administration in Washington is sorely failing in the task of keeping foreign allies in the war, and is completely failing in finding support for the war effort among any of those who they are trying to entice into joining forces with America. It is likely that there are too many media forces outside the United States aligned against the administration in Washington, and so much bad feeling is being generated against Washington, that this battle in the propaganda war is lost, but the administration in Washington has assigned great cash resources to attempt to reverse this trend. They are fighting an uphill battle with little hope of victory.

DEMORALIZE THE ENEMY

In all wars, efforts are made to demoralize the enemy or enemies, while at the same time, as described above, efforts to keep support up at home and with allies, potential allies, neutrals who may go to the side of the enemy, out of the war.

Techniques to demoralize range from the crude dropping of leaflets, either announcing the beginning of a bombing campaign, and surrender would be a better option than fighting, to media efforts to demoralize the homes and families of combatants by sending radio reports of the war, and announcing victories against the enemy, planting stories, passing leaflets, signs on poles by agents, and many other techniques. Control of the media in occupied territories provides the occupier with the opportunity to obfuscate, shape arguments against the occupier in favor of the occupier, ascribe atrocities to the enemy or enemies of the occupier. They can also plant stories about defeats of the home armies against the conqueror, even if they are not true. The goal is to demoralize, lessen support, break down resisters, and create the conditions necessary to take the fight out of both combatants, and non combatants.

Demoralization in an unconquered home state, can cause sagging enlistments in the home army, and can force the need for conscription, and the attendant lessening of the will to fight, especially by the conscripts, who are likely to be less skillful soldiers than the volunteer professionalized armies. Weakly trained armies, green conscripts thrown into battle before necessary training is accomplished can lead to victories from the side who wages the successful battle to demoralize, both those at home in support of the troops, and those who are fighting.

SUMMARY

Successful propaganda efforts can take the form of a long campaign, waged subtly in the background for many years, even decades. The campaigns can be in support of a war effort, as outlined here, it can take a commercial turn, for instance advertising a product, that in the absence of an advertising campaign, is a commodity which sells for much less in a competitive, undifferentiated market, or it can take the form of a political campaign. For a political campaign, it can be either for or against a candidate, for or against some economic interest, or an effort to line someone's pocket at the expense of someone else, frequently a taxpayer.

Some early advertising efforts that had great traction in American culture were, in the 1890's, Proctor and Gamble's campaign to market Ivory soap as "99 and 44/100's per cent pure", and "It Floats". P and G later came up with a bright printing process and created excess demand over commoditized competitors with the creation of Tide detergent, still a market leader after over 60 years.

Political campaigns can take the form of simple slogans like, for instance. "I like Ike" or political jabs, "Give'em hell, Harry!". They can evoke fear against the other candidate, like the Lyndon Johnson ad with the little girl plucking petals off a daisy, then a mushroom cloud after she plucked the last petal. Fear, or racism can be a theme against a candidate, as the infamous Willie Horton ads in the 1984 campaign. Fast forward to 2004, and the political campaign can take the form of vicious personal attack, like the Swift Boat campaign, or the adroit use of ridicule, as the flip flop mantra in the same campaign achieved the successful outcome of re-electing an unpopular president.

An example of an as-yet unsuccessful, but persistent campaign to implement a political agenda is last year's attempt to privatize (or create personal accounts) Social Security in America. This effort was the culmination of a 25 year effort led by conservative think tanks; financial services lobbyists, financial services Political Action Committees (PAC's), Wall Street (shorthand characterization of the financial markets, insurance business, banking interests, and others).

This was a background campaign for many years since the last attempt to privatize in 1982. The causes of the failure were analyzed, and a political strategy to split the political powers aligned against the move to privatize or in the words of a 1983 paper published by the CATO Institute to “phase out” Social Security, and replace it with a privatized system. The term privatized comes from another paper published in 1983 by the CATO Institute. (See CATO Institute Journal, Page 547 and page 557. The fact that this would be a long propaganda and political campaign is acknowledged in the page 547 article:

“Finally, we must be prepared for a long campaign. The next Social Security crisis may be further away than many people believe. Or perhaps it will occur before the reform coalition is strong enough to achieve a political breakthrough. In either case, it could be many years before the conditions are such that such a radical reform of Social Security is possible. But then, as Lenin well knew, to be a successful revolutionary, one must be patient and consistently plan for real reform.” Source: CatoJournal, vol 3, no. 2 (Fall 1983). Article begins on page 547, and quoted passage is on page 556.

The article quoted above is by Stuart Butler and Peter Germanis, and is titled *ACHIEVING A “LENNINST” STRATEGY*. Caps and quotation marks from the publication.

In total, the prime tools of the propagandist are simplification, repetition and the manipulation of symbols like flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, Freedom, Power, prestige, fear, racism, religion, class divisions, and using this manipulation to achieve influence of public opinion in a way that the public may not have considered, had the propaganda effort not taken place. In America today, elements on both sides of the political continuum from right to left are engaged in a ferocious propaganda war, and at the extreme ends of the scale on both sides, the techniques are heavy-handed, but effective to influence audiences on both sides that may be considered the choir that is being preached to. As in all political battles, the appeals are to create or shore up a “base” and to swing those in the middle to one side or the other. The psychological characteristics to be influenced are: Aggressiveness, Guilt, Weakness and Affection.

Source for the paragraph immediately above: Harold D Lasswell, *Politics, Who Gets What, When and How*, University of Chicago Press, 1936, Chapter II, Symbols. This book is a classic in understanding how propaganda affects political processes, coalitions, controlling resources, and ultimately winning in politics. It uses examples in real time of how Hitler was using wedge issues to influence public opinion, and use those wedges to increase his power. The manipulation of factions to marginalize Jews and Communists are particularly fascinating. And chilling.

Those associated with the majority power in Washington have the upper hand in the propaganda war at this time, due to a longer lead time, more channels, better funding and the proverbial bully pulpit. The other side is catching up fast, and should resist the urge to drift into the dishonesty that characterizes the other side. A failure to present a true picture of events has the potential to lead to serious repercussions down the road. I do not care to speculate what form this will take, but major dislocations are a significant possibility, in my view. Those dislocations can take the form of economic collapse, wars, civil disobedience, rioting, a reaction against government institutions, due to a perception of illegitimacy, failure of government to deliver promises, failure of government to maintain order, or the maintenance of order by repressive means. These are not good outcomes for America.

The goals of this essay are to help the reader identify propaganda, understand its methods in a rudimentary way and how to separate the truth from the chaff of planted stories supporting a political point, or “advocacy journalism”. Another goal is to make the reader aware, if he/she is not already aware of it, that recently, a massive propaganda effort to justify war with Iran, and to create “War Fever” is underway. The reader is urged to examine the propaganda buildup, assess the sources of the propaganda, and make a judgment whether the propaganda matches the threat. Just the facts, ma’am.

April 1, 2006
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4. Two bloggers in my acquaintance provided helpful suggestions, both with the draft, and later with the errors that found their way into the finished copy. I accept responsibility for all errors.
5. Steven Thomma of Knight-Ridder Newspapers identified the Butler and Germanis article in a story published on February 5, 2005. Thomma article: <http://www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/10820193.htm>, Butler and Germanis article: http://find.cato.org/search?q=butler+germanis&btnG=Go&site=cato_all&client=cato_all&restrict=Cato&lr=lang_en&output=xm|_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cato.org%2Ftemplates%2Fsearch%2Fcato.xslt&getfields=summary Click on the top article. If this link is expired, go to the Cato home page: <http://www.cato.org/>, and search on: butler germanis .