

Dear All

The current Ukraine Russia war is the first one to be fought in a social media world. I traced back for my own learning the role of information and media in past wars and here's my understanding:

World War 1

1. The medium available then was posters, radio and magazines.
2. President Woodrow Wilson forced censorship on newspapers, magazines and radio in national interest.
3. This was not taken well by the media.
4. In World War 1 journalists were not allowed to the front line, a journalist Basil Clarke smuggled himself to the front line with a convoy of French soldiers. In April 1915, the ban was lifted on journalists and they were then free to travel to the front line as long as they wore a press badge and carried no arms. Many media journalists were captured and killed in World War 1.
5. All letters from the frontline were censored.

World War 2

1. Radio became the primary vehicle and English the medium of best communication.
2. 90 % of Americans owned a radio and Germany would broadcast propaganda for 11 hours every day, a lot in English with the sole aim to discredit or offer a counterpoint to the popular BBC. The German government gave away low-cost radios free to the public so that they could listen to the propaganda. The German information minister called Radio, the 8th most powerful force in the world.
3. Stars and stripes is an American armed forces newspaper from 1861. It was revived in WW 2. It carried articles written by the army journalists. The number of newspapers/tabloids printed by American service men went from 500 to 4000 as almost every infantry and platoon had a newspaper.
4. Stars and stripes also carried advertising as a revenue source and also had entertainment news to keep morale high. Lucky strike cigarettes launched in 1917 were advertised in the stars and stripes newspaper. Chewing gum was also advertised.
5. Posters were used effectively to recruit people to the armed forces and also to get women to come and work in war factories.
6. All letters from the front continued to be censored.
7. The entertainment industry was controlled by the government and was used in a big way to boost morale of both the forces and the public.
8. President Roosevelt started the Office of War Information in 1942, to get more open and fair news coverage of the war.
9. Americans subscribed to a morning newspaper and an evening newspaper.
10. Cinema footage was a popular medium in World War 2, a million Britons went to see an update of the war in theatres.

The next big war after this was the Vietnam war. This was the first of a series of wars where America was the protagonist and America was playing the benevolent global leader. American media coverage of a war where America is involved is always challenged by every other country. American coverage of their own war is seen as binary by the world, where American media comes to a simple us vs them.

The 1991 Iraq war was the first live televised war, where everything was covered 24 by 7 by CNN.

The Ukraine war coverage is different in the following ways:

1. We have citizens reporting on Instagram wapp, etc. Their reporting is faster than any news channel.
2. We have location time identified in the coverage giving it authenticity.
3. We have significant fake news, so separating the truth from fake is a daily task.
4. There is zero censorship or governments cannot enforce any censorship.
5. Governments have very little control over news that's published.
6. The entertainment industry is on the sidelines as individuals and not mobilized to create optimism.

Feedback welcome

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