'Masters of the gags': Cartoonist visions of war and peace, 1941–45

Caryn Coatney, University of Southern Queensland, caryn.coatney@usq.edu.au

Abstract

Despite their communicative power, cartoonists have often been viewed as the detached outsiders of the newsroom. This article contributes to the relatively new area of research into cartooning as a significant, enduring aspect of journalism. It is the first study to focus on the caricaturists' editorial clout in visualising post-imperial communities while defying isolationist politics during the Australian–US alliance during World War II. This case study fills gaps in the research by revealing the forgotten role of wartime caricaturists in Australia's increasingly assertive foreign policies. Their images signified a symbolic geography that involved more diverse voices in transcending imperial divisions. The humour strategy helped Australian Prime Minister John Curtin to win public confidence in his leadership of the nation's war. This lost conception of cartooning as a journalism profession can provide fresh insights into tracing the industry's developments. The article indicates that the hidden value of cartoonists deserves higher status and just rewards.

Keywords: editorial cartoons; Franklin Delano Roosevelt; John Curtin; journalism; World War II

Introduction

Although often neglected, a distinctively independent profession of Australian editorial cartoonists emerged from the era of government-media cooperation during World War II. Improved media services contributed to a pictorial turn in wartime journalism. More cartoonists moved from a Sydney-based club of unconventional freelancers, known as the Bohemians, to full-time positions as 'masters of the gags' in newsrooms (Frith, 1994). By early 1942, a Canadian Gallery cartoon exhibition organiser noticed that the Australian displays were prominent for their individual styles and remarkable skills (*Smith's Weekly*, 1942). Australia's World War II Prime Minister John Curtin, a one-time Bohemian magazine apprentice, recruited the newsroom cartoonists as his allies to sway international opinion and White House attitudes towards defending the nation. This is the first study to focus on the value of humour as a communication strategy during the Australian–US alliance during World War II (hereafter the war).

The article contributes to the growing literature on international conflict resolution by bringing new insights to the development of cartoon humour as a significant strategy in public diplomacy (Wakefield, 2007; Zelizer, 2010). A new analysis of rarely viewed archival material shows how the Australian administration initiated humour techniques to persuade correspondents and influence the White House during the Pacific war from

1941 to 1945 (Alexander, 1971; Casey, 1942; Coatney, 2016; Curtin, 1942a; Department of Defence, 1942; Stilwell, 1941–45). Curtin developed humorous tactics through cultivating informal news talks, visual symbolism and close professional relations with cartoonists. His news techniques contrasted with the more formal press briefings of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. This humour strategy aided the Australian administration in lobbying the country's Allies to escalate the nation's defence (Alexander, 1833–57; Attlee, 1942; Bliss, 1942; Casey, 1942; Curtin, 1942a, 1942b; Finey, 1987; Frith, 1994; Hollowood, 1944; *New York City Guild Reporter*, 1944; Rodgers, 1971; *Spectator*, 1942; Strube, 1942; UK Dominions Office, 1942).

This study also draws upon the concepts of media scholars Foucault, Ericson and colleagues, and Habermas to ascertain the relations of power and consensus between the wartime administration and editorial teams. As Foucault (1975, pp. 25, 27) states, 'it was necessary for power to be self-effacing, for it not to show itself as power'. The wartime reporting accomplished what scholars Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) have described as an articulation of a public sense of crisis. For Habermas (2006), an informed public sphere depended on journalists' participation in political conversations. First, this study's literature review reveals gaps in the research of wartime cartooning. Second, the study outlines its methodological approach to assess cartoonists' representations of the Australian government's Allied campaign. Third, the findings demonstrate that the government gave privileged status to Australian cartoonists as an influential profession. As this article concludes, the persuasive government tactics influenced editorial images and White House attitudes towards a stronger role for Australia. The study also reveals complex tensions in newsrooms over the cartoonists' roles.

Literature review

Traditional war scholarship often overlooked the role of humour in helping to resolve conflicts. Zelizer (2010) identified the value of comedy in improving relations among divided societies, while Lynch (2002) found that humour can reduce tensions in combat situations. Goggin (2011), Harrington (2011), and O'Donnell and Hutchinson (2015) noted that humour in news formats has made a significant contribution to the democratic process by involving more audiences in topics of governance. These research approaches shifted from studies of leaders' speeches as rigid, structured and solemn occasions in times of crisis (Clayman, 1992).

This article has drawn upon communication approaches towards the analysis of political humour. Ancient scholars, including Aristotle (trans. 2009), Cicero (trans. 2016) and Quintilian (trans. 2001), developed the rhetorical benefits of humour in persuading audiences to accept the speakers' views. Contemporary approaches have rejected the Aristotelian theory of comedy as 'an imitation of characters of a lower type' (2009). Lynch (2002) and Lintott (2016) have recommended self-deprecatory humour for a speaker to appear on equal terms with audiences. They argue that a speaker's use of humble witticisms can signify close interactions with the public. Inclusive wit can generate the media appearance of a leader being a peer among citizens (Lombardini,

2013). The concepts of democratic laughter have turned from the superiority humour of ridicule, mimicry and satirical attempts to control and exclude other audiences.

Researchers have focused increasingly on more unconventional news formats than supposedly factual war reporting. Brookes (1989) found that the popular British cartoonist Sidney Strube of the *Daily Express* developed the character of the 'Little Man' to encourage readers to identify with the Conservative Party's pre-war appeasement policies. Deane (2007) shows that cartoons would unify and bolster audiences in Australia and Britain in 1941 and 1942. Minear (1999) notes that New York's *PM* cartoonist Theodore Geisel developed his persona, Dr Seuss, as an outlet for venting disapproval of the group of 'America First' isolationists opposed to the US entry into the war. The conflict generated a plethora of images on women, including cartoonist Norman Rockwell's shipbuilder figure, 'Rosie the Riveter', in the *Saturday Evening Post* (Montgomery, 1996). Chapman and colleagues (2015) have examined Australian cartoonist Kathleen (Kath) O'Brien's creation of the newspaper comic strip, 'Wanda the War Girl'. Government strategies included a shift in censorship policies from the suppression of news to publicity campaigns of Australia (Hilvert, 1984). This study situates the journalism genre of cartooning in the context of the wartime government's humour tactics to win over correspondents. An Australian Labor Party (ALP) prime minister from Creswick, Victoria, Curtin elevated the cartoonists' role as a knowledge class that could take power by shaping public knowledge of the nation's wartime role (Frow, 1995).

Methodology

A rare analysis of archival material will compare the White House's secret Australian discussions with Curtin's humour techniques to win editorial support for the bilateral alliance. The study has investigated the confidential cables of Roosevelt, his advisers and Curtin as part of the wartime *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*; this source has been used to provide new perspectives on the administration's ability to involve editorial teams in a campaign to win US government and public sympathy for the nation's defence (Attlee, 1942; Casey, 1942; Curtin, 1942a, 1942b; UK Dominions Office, 1942). Moreover, an analysis has been made of the secret diaries of US Army General Joseph W. Stilwell (1941–45), whose typescript papers on the Southeast Asia campaign are lodged at the Hoover Institution Archives. No previous researcher has used these contemporaneous accounts, as well as censorship memoranda and correspondents' off-the-record notes and reminiscences, as sources for providing insights into the Australian government's humour tactics to recruit journalists' support for strengthening its defence campaign (Alexander, 1971; Department of Defence, 1942; Burns, October 10, 1941; Cox, 1944-1945; Department of Information, 1941; Finey, 1987; Frith, 1994; Harsch, 1993; Rafty, 1942). Furthermore, this study has delved into Curtin's early commentaries and related correspondence from when he was a labour-oriented newspaper editor (1915, 1916, 1921, 1926), lodged at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, to ascertain his attitudes towards debates over cartoon images, offensive material and censorship.

For this purpose, this article uses media content analysis techniques to find out how cartoonists portrayed the Australian government's Allied campaign. Wartime publications were selected on the basis of their professional stature, illustration commentaries and widespread circulation. The sample consisted of the following newspapers: *PM*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times-Herald* in the United States; the British-based publications the *London Illustrated News*, *Punch* and *The Spectator*; and in Australia, *The Argus*, the Brisbane *Telegraph*, the *Canberra Times,* the *Daily Telegraph*, *Smith's Weekly*, the *Sun*, the *Sun News-Pictorial*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sunday Times*. An analysis is made of the humourists' underlying motivations, humour texts, audience reactions, timing, tone of delivery and the context of the social environment (Lynch, 2002; Zelizer, 2010). By applying these methods, this article assesses cartoonists' role in portraying the Allied campaign.

Findings and discussion

In the early war years, journalists complained about censorship delays in reviewing their news copy. Curtin's government changed the bureaucratic restrictions to 'a more flexible and "intimate" system' to allow for informal discussions between censors and journalists (Department of Defence, 1942, p. 29). As a *Timber Worker* editor in World War I, he privately complained about a censor's restrictive blue pencil while writing to his future wife's family:

> What a fuss there has been today. Why the censor actually took out a cartoon I had for the July *Timber Worker* & now I have had to fill up the space with prose. Ye Gods this is liberty! (1915)

During the shift in bureaucratic policies, state censor C. Burns (Department of Information, 1941) noted that he received a phone call from CLO Army Major Laughlin, who objected to the *Sun News-Pictorial's* adventure comic strip of two larrikin soldiers, 'Bluey and Curley'. Laughlin took exception to cartoonist Alex Gurney's dual-panel gag depicting the two soldier figures stealing a pig in Egypt 'because of the bad light in which it showed our troops, and secondly because of possible "international repercussions"'. In a private memorandum, Burns explained to the chief publicity censor that, 'I suppressed a strong desire to laugh over the telephone' during his conversation with Laughlin, and he did not punish the newspaper. Burns' confidential memorandum exemplified a fresh, informal approach to resolving censorship disputes.

Curtin appealed directly to cartoonists to win their cooperation in the war effort. He promoted his youthful experience as a 'printer's devil' working for his Creswick friend, the artist and cartoonist Norman Lindsay, whose Bohemian *Rambler* magazine was based on the English comic weekly *Pick-me-up* (British Pathé, 1944). A commentator noted that, 'This was the atmosphere in which young John Curtin grew up, so it is no wonder he has printers' ink in his blood' (*The Worker*, 1941, p. 10). He attempted to ease tensions with *The Bulletin*, a target of his earlier editorial criticism of its 'ridiculous' anti-Labor cartoons (1926). With his wife Elsie Curtin, he visited the studio of *Bulletin* principal caricaturist John Frith (1994). The cartoonist recalled that

Curtin gestured towards him and 'seemed to indicate to me that I was possibly less than the dirt on the sole of his shoe'. Frith changed his view towards a 'memorable meeting with a very fine man' after Curtin introduced himself by extending his hand. Likewise, Curtin developed a friendship with Journalists' Club president and cartoonist Syd Nicholls, who invited him to speak as a guest of honour at official luncheons in Sydney (Rafty, 1942; *Sun*, 1943a). According to the Sydney *Sun* (1942a), Curtin's full-time press secretary Don Rodgers displayed one of the newspaper's cartoons in his office. The cartoon showed a man reading news about Nazism and saying contemptuously, 'Who does this guy Hitler think he is – John Curtin!' The administration included cartoonists as part of a knowledge class whose power derived from their ability to influence audiences (Frow, 1995). Developing identification humour, Curtin signified his affiliation with cartoonists' goals to elicit their cooperation in constituting visions of order, stability and change (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987).

Behind the scenes, Curtin resisted Churchill's cabled demands and Roosevelt's urging to send more Australian troops to the battles in Burma in February 1942. He insisted in a cable to Roosevelt, 'As we see the whole problem, our vital centres are in immediate danger' (Curtin, 1942a). Roosevelt replied, 'I fully understand your position in spite of the fact that I cannot wholly agree.' Even so, he concluded, 'Under any circumstances you can depend upon our fullest support' (Casey, 1942). Without the other Allied leaders' knowledge, Curtin showed the top-secret cables to a small circle of journalists on the basis that they would not disclose the information (Alexander, 1971). Two years later, the *Sun* only hinted at the disclosure in Stuart Peterson's (1944) cartoon titled 'Scandalous Spectacle', which showed a figure resembling Curtin reading private correspondence.

During the cable dispute, Strube (1942) drew a cartoon of 'Australia' as a determined lion wearing a tin hat labelled, 'Total Mobilisation' for London's *Daily Express*. The headline, 'Home Pitch', indicated editorial endorsement of Australia's defence strategy. Strube (1940) elevated Australia's role since his cartoon of *HMAS Sydney* victories when he personified the warship as 'Syd', a humble bulldog reporting his success to big brother 'Jack' for British audiences. Likewise, Geisel (1942a) began shifting from prevalent Empire images in Seuss cartoons for *PM*. He characterised Australia as a super-sized boxing kangaroo, struggling to ward off Axis enemies. A lobster, representing Japan, clawed at the kangaroo's tail that hovered near a map of Australia. After Curtin's cabled appeal, Geisel (1942b) also drew 'Australia' as a drowning kangaroo with a joey seeking to hurry up a slow-moving rescuer, 'America', presented as Noah in his ark. The kangaroo appeared with other animals representing former British colonies; however, Geisel deliberately omitted any reference to the empire (Minear, 1999).

Other editorial messages endorsed the Australian government's calls for increased participation in Allied decisions (Hancock, 1943). A London *Spectator* writer opined that, 'The Australians are able to take blows and stand reverses as well as we are – so long as they feel that they have had their share in shaping war-plans' (*Spectator*, 1942, p. 1). The correspondents accomplished a media campaign on the need for more correction, repair, alteration, improvement and resources (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987).

Editors published humorous images to portray the alliance favourably to mark the arrival of US General Douglas MacArthur in Australia in March 1942. To enhance Curtin's role in the alliance, he invited MacArthur to his confidential conferences on the urgency of an escalated Allied offensive in the Southwest Pacific. An Australian reporter, Joseph Alexander, recalled that, 'He [MacArthur] said if he were in charge he would pour millions of men and masses of material into Australia' (17 July 1942). As part of their humour strategy, Curtin and MacArthur promoted the role of the cartoonists. MacArthur sent a congratulatory message to *The Bulletin's* Frith for his cartoon of a zebra family that included a foal covered in stars and stripes. An army official visited *The Bulletin*'s newsroom to buy 200 copies of the cartoon because MacArthur said 'it was one of the funniest things he's ever seen' (Frith, 1994). An American correspondent in Australia, Joseph Harsch (1993, p. 102), recalled receiving a 'brainwashing' while interviewing MacArthur as he delivered 'a sculpted sermon on the opportunities being wasted in his theater of operations by the mistaken Europe First strategy'. Harsch (1993, p. 103) reminisced that MacArthur 'made me feel that somehow the future of the free world depended on my carrying that message to the very top in Washington'.

US editors often cooperated with MacArthur to exaggerate Allied achievements by mid-1942. A week after the Battle of the Coral Sea, Geisel (1942c) portrayed a group of Japanese commanders as a circus act performing in the Southwest Pacific; the star player prepared to springboard to 'complete and utter destruction' in the cartoon, published under the pseudonym of Dr Seuss. Although the battle was a stalemate, it might have influenced Geisel's premature optimism of the war's end (Minear, 1999). Another Seuss cartoon depicted the Battle of Midway as defeating an Axis dragon (Geisel, 1942d). The militaristic cartoons accomplished Foucault's (1975) conception of masking tensions.

In turn, cartoonists lobbied to become influential commentators by working closely with the Australian Government. Editors agreed to self-censor war news in exchange for journalists' access to Curtin's confidential briefings. *Smith's Weekly* managing director C.E.F. McKay wrote to him:

> We have indeed sacrificed what might be called 'popular journalism' to a whole-hearted war job … We are a responsible people and have enforced upon our own columns a very rigid voluntary censorship. (Curtin, 1942c, McKay to J. Curtin, 11 June 1942, p. 49).

Journalists publicised their acquiescence; a *Sun* reporter (1942b) quoted a World War I censor's recollection that 'we were sort of a secret service then, but no occasion for that sort of thing has arisen during this war'. The long-standing censor opined that the relatively new 'honour' form of censorship had 'greatly eased the strain' between the government and journalists (1942b, p. 2).

The War Art Council (1942) submitted a plan to the government, outlining its request for cartoonists to create more timely war messages by embedding themselves in the US Army in Australia. The council chairman, Sydney Ure Smith, complained that government propagandists drew cartoons weeks ahead of their release, meaning that these were too general to appeal. Representing the Australian Journalists' Association

(AJA) artists' section, Ure argued that cartoonists would develop more topical themes if embedded in military units. 'The cartoon is news pressed into a picture, and is useless if not served piping hot' (War Art Council, 1942, S. Ure Smith & R. Haughton James to J. Curtin, 14 April 1942, p. 28). Other Allied news companies elevated the cartoonists' role in releasing war dispatches – for example, London's *Daily Express* included late-breaking headlines on its front pages to promote Strube's special midnight cartoon or a 3 am cartoon (23 December 1941, 26 May 1942, p. 1). The artists' campaign to be embedded with military units exemplified a journalistic trend to emphasise the urgency of Allied pictorial news.

Australian editors cooperated with Curtin's appeal in news conferences to counter the 'ballyhoo' of some exaggerated US news reports (Cox, 10 July 1944). The newsrooms' cartoonists took an unconventional approach to their war subjects to display a combined style of ebullience and common sense (*Smith's Weekly*, 1942). The *Daily Telegraph*'s William (Bill) Mahony (1942) depicted Curtin as warning a US soldier to look behind him because an enemy soldier was about to knife him in the back (Scrapbooks Compiled by the Prime Minister's Office, 1942–44, Mahony, 16 March 1942). Similarly, a *Smith's Weekly* cartoon portrayed 'Australia' as an older woman looking wisely from a window of her home to counsel a baton-wielding policeman, 'USA', working his beat on the Pacific Highway. 'Australia' advised 'USA': 'Now you're on this beat, let's get better acquainted' (*Smith's Weekly*, 1942). Australian cartoonists often portrayed the nation's soldiers as practical youths more concerned about events back home than fighting (Lahm, 1942; *Sun*, 1943b). Armstrong (1943a, 1943b) represented them as 'Dinkum Mossies', or mosquitoes, capable of slowly undermining Axis gains.

More diverse imagery emerged with O'Brien's adventure comic strip about a young Australian servicewoman, 'Wanda the War Girl', who took a leading role in battles. 'Wanda' differed from such contemporaneous cartoon figures as Rockwell's shipbuilder, 'Rosie the Riveter', Strube's 'Land Girls' farm workers and the romanticised 'Windy City Kitty' in a magazine for American soldiers in Australia (Rockwell, 1943; Strube, 1945; *Sun*, 1945a). O'Brien portrayed her as a 'young Amazon' participating in hand-to-hand battle with an Australian commando unit in Burma (*Sunday Times*, 1943, p. 14). By 1944, the comic had appeared as a full-colour section in Brisbane's *Telegraph* and Perth's *Sunday Times*, which promoted it to the newspaper's second page.

The cartoon battle scenes glossed over Curtin's refusal to send more Australian forces to Burma two years earlier. At the time, US General Stilwell claimed the defeat in Burma was a blow to Allied pride, telling editors, 'I claim we got a hell of a beating' (Stilwell, 25 February, 12 March, 27 April 1942; *New York Times*, 1942). Roosevelt's close aide, Lauchlin Currie, secretly remarked to Stilwell that his 'blast on Burma to the press went big'. Stilwell (21 July 1942, p. 66) confidentially described his news briefing as, 'A little truth for a change.' The dispute did not alter idealised American visions of Australian soldiers. For example, a *New York Post* cartoon strip focused on the Australian commandos of the 'Sparrow Force' campaign in Timor in 1942. According to the *Sun* (1943c, p. 2), the Australian sparrows appeared as 'lean, tough men in slouch hats' who were celebrated as guerrilla heroes.

To win Allied journalists' support, Curtin invoked a strategy of identification humour during his trip to Britain, Canada and the United States in 1944. He cared deeply about his caricatured picture: 'Once he came to [Federal Minister] Chifley with a cartoon. Almost trembling, he said: "Have I got a nose like that?"' (Ross, 1958). Yet he encouraged a light-hearted media image. A *Washington Post* cartoon portrayed him as 'Citizen Curtin' with a caption:

> Being Prime Minister of Australia doesn't call for pomp and ceremony in the opinion of plain John Curtin. When he has somewhere to go, he hops a tram with the rest of the folks in Melbourne. (Bliss, 1942)

During his overseas trip, he pointed to his old AJA badge and referred to his background as a 'printer's devil' to signify his affiliation with international journalists (British Pathé, 1944; *New York City Guild Reporter*, 1944).

The media image of 'plain John Curtin' reappeared in pictorial news. *Washington Times-Herald* columnist Betty Hynes (Prime Minister's Secretary, 1944, Hynes, 25 April 1944, p. B6) concluded he was a 'great guy' because he 'never dodged a question' at a Washington news conference. A cartoon represented journalists' conceptions of him at a White House function, showing that he preferred to drink tea in the library (Prime Minister's Secretary, 1944, Eads, 21 May 1944). Even so, they announced that US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt gave the first White House state dinner since the beginning of the war to honour the Curtins, ending a period of social austerity for two and a half years (Prime Minister's Secretary, 1944, Citizen, 27 April 1944, p. 10). For a *Bulletin* cartoon, Norman Lindsay (1944) showed that his former apprentice's down-to-earth image helped to raise international audiences' awareness of Australia (Scrapbooks Compiled by the Prime Minister's Office, 1942–44, Lindsay, 24 May 1944). Soon afterwards, Rockwell (1944) depicted a growing sophistication among American news audiences by portraying a fatherly figure as an armchair general tuning into radio news in his study as he followed detailed maps; the room portraits included MacArthur's picture. Caricaturists pictured Curtin in similar scenes of domesticity, diverging from aristocratic images of Churchill's cigar and Roosevelt's cigarette holder and pince-nez glasses; in contrast, Geisel's wartime Seuss cartoons did not include the figure of the president, whom he revered from a distance (Minear, 1999).

Cartoonists experienced varied newsroom policies towards the targets of their lampoons. Frith (1994) moved from *The Bulletin* to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1944 and recalled that 'in Sydney one had almost the licence to draw cartoons according to one's own feelings, provided they were within reasonable orbit of the policy of the paper'. An *Argus* journalist (1942, p. 3) promoted the newspaper's editorial stance towards daily cartoonist Armstrong: 'His ideas are his own; it has been found that his genius finds expression only in artistic freedom.' *Herald* proprietor Sir Keith Murdoch was directly involved in daily editorial conferences with the cartoonist: 'Often Murdoch would be so clear in his own mind about the subject of the leader [editorial] that his outline of its contents could be taken down in shorthand by the leader-writer and used almost verbatim' (*Herald & Weekly Times*, 1952, p. 20). At the *Telegraph*, leading caricaturists George Finey (1987) and Mahony refused editor Brian Penton's order to satirise the government's response to coal mining disputes in 1944. Mahony

resigned rather than draw a cartoon of cigar-smoking miners ignoring a directive to 'dig real coal'. Finey was sacked when he also rejected the joke block; he was later reinstated. Notwithstanding the punitive *Telegraph* reaction, the attitudes of Mahony and Finey demonstrated the cartoonists valued their roles as knowledge linkers and information brokers between Curtin and audiences (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987).

The next year, columnists remarked on the decision of *Evening Standard* owner Lord Beaverbrook to grant leave to employee David Low, reportedly the world's highest paid cartoonist, during the British election campaign. A *Sun* writer opined:

> For years he [Beaverbrook] allowed cartoonist David Low whom he employed to make fun of him, his chunky figure, his face-splitting grin, his political views … Beaverbrook would not allow Low to make fun of the Conservatives during the election. (1945b, p. 2)

Editorial disagreements began to disturb newsroom scenes of unity during the receding Axis threat.

The expanding genre of cartoon news was accompanied by other journalistic innovations in Australia. A tabloid *Sun* journalist lampooned rival proprietor Warwick Fairfax's 'bombshell' decision to replace front-page classified advertising with news headlines in the *Sydney Morning Herald* broadsheet. The *Sun* included a mock interview with Fairfax about the layout change: '"This can go too far," said the proprietor of the Cafe de Fairfax, denying reports that the *Herald* has bought the re-print rights to "Wanda the War Girl"' (Slessor, 1944, p. 4). The column exemplified emerging editorial critiques of the limitations of the cartoonist visions of wartime Australia. Another *Sun* writer remarked on soldier stereotypes: 'there exists a different type of Digger from the hard-boiled, happy-go-lucky conception of the cartoonist' (Pryce, 1945, p. 4). The columnist argued for gritty depictions of battle realism to avoid glossing over the soldiers' bitter experiences. By the war's end, editorial critics were untroubled by the resurgence of the cartoon 'crack' at Japanese forces (*Washington Post*, 1942, p. 12). Remarkably, Curtin did not reproach bigoted illustrations, diverging from his denunciation of racist cartoons as a former editor and his correction of objectionable government propaganda (1921, Curtin, 1942d). Cartoonists signified that wartime Australians were keen to transition to peaceful visions of common sense, stability and domesticity, resembling Rockwell's (1944) 'Armchair General' and Strube's (1944) 'Little Man', whose post-war plans included a leisurely round of golf.

After Curtin's overseas trip, Roosevelt was including Australia in the democratic alliance to support the development of Asia-Pacific nations. Roosevelt said during a meeting with the Australian Minister to China, Sir Frederic William Eggleston, '[T]he Americans and the Australians could work together on a liberal policy on these matters.' He also remarked that he 'had liked Mr. Curtin very much' (Eggleston, 1944). International cartoons represented an independent Australia with varying degrees of hyperbole and hubris. The New York *Sun* depicted Australia as a mighty kangaroo with tin-hatted diggers in its pouch, crushing Axis forces (*Canberra Times*, 1945). *Punch* satirised the growing Allied recognition of Australia during a shift in the balance of power towards the US. Hollowood's (1944) cartoon showed British military figures

gazing astonished at a map centring on North America that included a duplicated image of Australia on both sides of the chart. The cartoon was titled, 'Do you mean to tell me you've never noticed there are two Australias?' Through Australia's public diplomacy, Allied governments and editorial teams increasingly recognised the nation's value as a global partner.

Conclusion

Developing the democratic power of cartoons, the Australian administration cultivated newsroom artists' ability to shape public perceptions of civic identity, nationhood and internationalism. The illustrations signified a symbolic geography that transcended divisions among Allied nations. Australian audiences were encouraged to identify with a vision of a strengthened Australia as a middle power in international relations.

The journalistic innovations allowed for the visual portrayal of more diverse roles and views. Idealised images of the diggers generated rare critiquing for covering over soldiers' bitter experiences. Cartoonists also influenced audiences to support their interpretations of Australian values of shrewd practicality as prevailing over brutality in the post-war world. This hidden role of humour reveals cartoonists' significance in the shifting relations of power, influence and official cooperation that shape visual representations of war.

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