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# Journalism in times of War and Crisis

*What does it take to be a war correspondent?*

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Mersch, May 2020

**Declaration of independence**

I hereby confirm that I have written this work independently and only with the specified aids.

Date: May 4, 2020

## Abstract

This paper will treat modern war journalism with a focus on Syria and the influence of the internet and social media on war reporting. The paper will be divided into two parts. The first part will focus on the working environment of a war correspondent where I define the difference between a reporter and a correspondent, the diverse methods of war reporting and how one prepares himself. The second part of this paper will consist of the biography of notable correspondents, how the internet and social media influence war journalism and the example of modern war journalism in Syria. Subsequently, I will have an interview with two journalists who both have experience in conflict reporting.

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## 1. Introduction

Wars are not only fought by the government or the military. Alongside the battleground, a war is fought through public opinion and through the media. The media and the Internet become a battleground like any other, and journalists are the ones fighting it, whether voluntarily or through orders from the government. But who are these correspondents? What is their motivation? There are a lot of questions regarding this topic, for example what kind of protection does a correspondent receive? Are there any laws against the killing of a war correspondent? What ethics are there in war journalism and what are you allowed to publish and what not?

Correspondent report first-hand from the scene of war, and risk their lives with every choice they make, only to inform the public about the actions and stories that take place on the front lines. It takes a lot to be a war correspondent both physically and mentally, I want to find out how far one is willing to gather information on the front lines. I will be treating a couple of perspectives concerning this subject, for example the ethics. In addition to this, I will be writing about the Syrian civil war and how the Internet and social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter changed modern journalism and influenced the civil war.

My goal for my practical work will be to interview an experienced conflict correspondent who has worked in crisis zones like the Middle East. The goal of the interview is to gather personal information, stories and experiences that I would not find on the internet.



## 2. The working environment of a Correspondent

### 2.1 Definition of journalism

Articles and reports shape the opinions and attitudes of an individual as well as a society as a whole. Journalism not only commentates on the happenings around the world but can also influence it. Journalism applies to a broad field of activities for example, news, reports, research and can be received through texts and images on television as well as internet platforms.

### 2.2 The difference between a reporter and a correspondent.

The main difference between a reporter and a correspondent is that a reporter will receive many different assignments in a short period of time, covering a diversity of events. Their work is used to compose so called “news stories” which are rather short. The ideal goal of a reporter is to explain a subject in the most efficient way in a short period of time.

Correspondents on the other hand are usually appointed to a region or a special and complicated subject like the Syrian War for example. Unlike a reporter, the correspondent studies the background and the whole importance behind a subject and becomes real experts on that subject. For example, imagine there is a very bad storm that destroys homes and leaves people with nothing but their clothes. A reporter would only describe the storm and explain what happened, this would be explained in a matter of 30 seconds. The correspondent however will be explaining a deeper and more detailed version. What led to the storm, economic problems, what will happen to the people that lost belongings during the storm, and how good (or how bad) the people were prepared for the storm.



### 2.3 The foreign correspondent

The classic foreign correspondent is transferred to another country by his publisher, agency or broadcaster. The foreign correspondent is in a way an external member of the reporting group

who lives in another country for a while and reports from there. He or she must know his reporting area well to be able to report the best he/she can. Working with the source, a foreign correspondent is able to talk directly to the people on site and is able to see for himself and understand what happened.

## 2.4 The war correspondent

The work of a war correspondent is considered a special form of journalism. In contrast to the foreign correspondent, the work of a war correspondent is limited to one event, an armed conflict of some sort, and usually ends when the event itself has ended.

## 2.5 Working methods

There is a variety of different working methods in war journalism. Some journalists only obtain their information from press conferences, contacts with political or military actors. Others do their research from a safe distance and report on how civilian's lives are or were affected by the war and consider the political context of the situation. Last but not least there are "front line reporters" who report directly from the action of the battlefield, risking their lives with every step and decision they make.

## 2.6 The Five Core Principles of Journalism

There are many codes and principles for journalists all over the world, but there are essential that have to be respected at all times. In 1997 the PEJ (Committee of Concerned Journalists) created the "Five Core Principles of Journalism" as a guideline for journalists all over the world.

### **Truth and accuracy**

Journalists and correspondents cannot always guarantee the truth, but they're job is to get the facts as right as possible, and to convey the information as accurate as possible. When there is doubt that the information isn't accurate enough, then it should not be published.

### **Independence**

Journalists should be as independent and neutral as possible, they should not act on behalf of personal interest, whether political or cultural.

**Fairness and Impartiality**

Should consider all perspectives of a story. There is no obligation to present every single side of the story, but you should however add balance and context to the story.

**Humanity**

A journalist should not harm others and be aware that the impact of words and images can be hurtful to others.

**Accountability**

A journalist should be responsible and hold themselves accountable for the mistakes they may have made.

**2.7 Working in war**

As in everyday journalism, the core principles “Truth and accuracy, Independence, Fairness and Impartiality, Humanity and Accountability” apply to reporting on war and in crisis. However, reality is different, when correspondents arrive and see war with their own eyes, they often forget about objectivity. How can you be objective if war crimes take place before your very eyes? However, despite all the difficult working conditions, as many sources as possible should be disclosed. Before a conflict situation goes public, it must be examined from all perspectives, and all arguments should be considered. War correspondent have to report authentically, but in order to report as authentically as possible, it is best to experience the situation. In order to verify and check information, numerous witnesses have to be interviewed about what happened.

**2.8 The fixer**

A fixer is a person who solves problems and gets things done. In war journalism this is a person (often a local journalist or a person who has experience working with journalists) living in or around the crisis area who knows his way around and makes arrangements such as transport and security. Fixers act as translators as well as guides and will in most cases help to arrange local interviews the correspondent would otherwise not have had access to.

### 3. Preparation

The best way for correspondents to prepare themselves is to know exactly what is happening in the country he will be working in. Correspondents should do in-depth research about the area they are going to. If they are going to a country where armed conflict is a part of the risks (Syria for example), they should inform themselves about the history of the country, the current situation, the political situation, the dangers they may face and how to make contact with people that live there and could be useful. There is not really a way to prepare yourself mentally because there is no way to know exactly what is going to happen, and the situations change constantly.

Reporting on armed conflicts usually require special experience and skills. The media should primarily choose people who already are familiar and have experience with crisis and war situations. The preparation for behaviour in dangerous and risky situations is helpful in order to reduce risks of being injured or even killed. There are special courses for journalists that can last for several years.-In Germany for example, the Bundeswehr trains journalists on how to act and what to do in these kinds of situations. Furthermore, correspondents should take care of insurance for the crisis area in the event of illness, death and incapacity to work before going. The equipment which is used by the journalist is organized by the agency.



### 3.1 First aid and survival classes

War correspondents, especially younger journalists, are invited to follow training sessions provided mostly by private companies consisting of former members of special forces or, in certain countries like Germany, by the army itself. The classes known as HEFAT (Hostile Environment and First Aid Training) cover hostage taking, roadblocks, riots, computer security and first aid. First aid is especially essential if you are badly wounded and the nearest hospital is 100km away. It can save your own life but also that of others. Most media systematically send their war correspondents to attend these courses. Specific projects have been set up, such as Reporters Instructed in saving Colleagues (RISC) created in 2012 to train journalists specifically in medical first aid.

### 3.2 RISC training

RISC (Reporters instructed in saving colleagues) is a training camp for freelance journalists who report in combat zones. Their goal is it to train freelance correspondents to treat injuries on the battlefield for example. They also instruct people on how to act in intense combat situations. This training is completely free of charge and gives young journalists the possibility to talk to more experienced correspondents who know what it is like to be on the battlefield. The training camp offers simulations like creating a safety plan, vehicle and checkpoint procedures, covering protests and riots, surveillance detection, digital best practices and shootouts,



## 4. Protection of correspondents

### 4.1 Associations created to protect correspondents

Associations created to defend journalists have since their creation tried to ensure the protection of journalists and correspondents engaged in dangerous missions on hostile territory. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), created in 1926, the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ), founded in 1938, the International Press Institute (IPI), born in 1950, have regularly reported attacks on journalists during armed conflicts.

It was in the 1980's that the protection of journalists and correspondents really took off. New associations emerged, in particular the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), created in 1981 by two journalists, Michael Massing and Laurie Nadel, and Reporters without Borders founded in 1985 by Robert Ménard. Over the years, these organisations developed their capacity to investigate in cases of violation, mobilized the profession and organized huge advocacy activities for national and international authorities. One of their priorities was the right of journalists to

inform during armed conflicts and press freedom.

The creation of the INSI (International News Safety Institute) in 2004, the BBC and CNN confirmed and agreed to better protect war correspondents.

Despite all the support and protection war correspondents get from associations like

the Committee to Protect Journalists or the International News safety Institute, the safety of correspondent on the field is never fully assured. Conflict situations are unpredictable, and anything can happen where these associations might not be able to interfere immediately.



## 4.2 International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

International Humanitarian Law is a group of rules who try and control the effects of war. These laws protect people who are not participating in hostilities as a combatant. It is known as the law of armed conflict.

At first, it doesn't seem like international humanitarian law grants journalists a whole lot of protection for correspondents, because there are only two articles protecting the safety of media personnel (Article 4 and Article 79). But if you read them thoroughly, it becomes clear that the protection under international humanitarian law is very extensive. For example, Article 79 explains that correspondents are entitled to all the same rights and protections granted to civilians in times of war. Which means that harming a correspondent during conflict is strictly prohibited and will be punished. However, this is only the case as long as the correspondent doesn't affect its status as a civilian. This means, if a correspondent participates in any kind of hostilities (firing a weapon, or harming a person), they lose their protection under IHL.

However, the IHL is criticized for not being specific and detailed enough. For example, the IHL states that war correspondents are considered as civilians. The IHL only distinguishes between combat participants and non-participants, and so it doesn't provide correspondents with more protection. The second issue is that there is no precise definition of who is a journalist and who isn't. The increase of media active citizens, citizen journalists and bloggers make it hard to define who is a journalist and who is a citizen. At first, this doesn't seem important, but it becomes complicated when it comes to protection. It is difficult to decide to who you grant protection and to who not.

There are various laws and rules that theoretically protect war correspondents in conflict situations, the problem however is not that there are not enough laws and rules to prevent anything bad to happen. The issue is that there is the theoretical and then there is reality. War is not all about rules and "the bad" side fighting "the good" side anymore. In today's wars (Syria for example), countries are being ripped apart by civil wars and religious prosecution

### 4.3 Organization for security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

1975, the heads of state and government of a total of 35 countries signed the CSCE final act. In 1994 however, the CSCE was renamed the OSCE. The goals of the OSCE are to improve conditions, simplify access to information and to create legal security to protect against any hostilities in the hosting country. The OSCE only exists through conferences so it is not an active organisation with permanently working staff.

### 4.4 UNESCO Media declaration

The United Nations passed a declaration in 1978 that is still valid to this day and is divided in eleven different articles. The main goal of this declaration is to insure the free exchange of information and opinion, human rights and the rights of journalists at home and abroad. In conclusion, this declaration should ensure favourable conditions for the work of the media and its journalists. However, the member states are only requested to follow the principles, whether these agreements will be accepted and maintained is not always guaranteed. The security of journalists in crisis areas is never guaranteed even in the countries which signed international law.

### 4.4 Do war correspondents get any special protection?

Journalists and correspondents are both recognized as civilians and get the according protection, however only a correspondent is granted the protection from armed forces and the prisoner of war status, which means that if they get kidnapped or imprisoned they should be “protected against any kind of violence or intimidation and they are entitled to food, hygiene and medical care. However, this is just in theory, respecting the law and reality is a different story.



## 5. The dangers and risks of a war correspondent.

The job of a war correspondent is influenced by the risks and dangers involved with gathering information including death, injury, kidnap, harassment and even imprisonment. This chapter will consider the risks a correspondent faces, and the available training a war correspondent may receive to make it through hostile and dangerous territory. But not every correspondent gets special training because of various reasons (lack of time, maybe there are not any classes available in that country).

In the past, most wars were fought between countries with national armies with well-trained soldiers. War correspondents used to work closely with one army. In World War I and II and Vietnam for example, correspondents wore military uniforms and were equipped with military equipment and travelled back and forth with the troops. This even continued until Iraq and Afghanistan where correspondents were embedded with the U.S troops. This meant access to numerous benefits like protection, medical care and safer travel.

Today, war and conflict have evolved and have become a lot more complex. In Syria, militias have been fighting groups of rebel fighters. Which causes issues for the correspondents working in that area because it's harder to get a hand of information. And there is only one option, go with the rebel, because it is there the story



material is, as governments usually deny any type of journalistic activity. The Syrian government has generally tried to keep foreign correspondents out and has only granted very few visas to journalists and providing only brief tours which offered very little information of how the people

were feeling and even tailored the information given to correspondents so the world see what they want them to see.

Based on journalist organizations like the “International Press Institute” (IPI) and the “Committee to Protect Journalists” (CPJ), more than 1400 correspondents and media workers like cameramen lost their lives during the years of 1997 and 2014, and the vast majority of the reporting on wars or armed conflicts of some kind.

### 5.1 Top 10 most dangerous countries to report in according to the CPJ

The “Committee to Protect Journalists” (CPJ), is a non-profit organization that reports on the safety or casualties of journalists all over the world. The organization created a list of the 20 most dangerous countries for journalists and correspondents. The following countries were ranked by the number of journalist casualties in the past 10 years. The list provides information about journalists and correspondents who have gone missing, were imprisoned as well as all the known murder cases of the journalists killed in action.

1. Syria with 129 casualties
2. Iraq with 45 casualties
3. Somalia with 35 casualties
4. Pakistan with 35 casualties
5. Mexico with 29 casualties
6. Afghanistan with 28 casualties
7. Brazil with 25 casualties
8. India with 23 casualties
9. Yemen with 20 casualties
10. The Philippines with 13 casualties

In 2020, 6 journalists have lost their lives, whether they have been murdered or got caught up in the crossfire.

## 5.2 Psychological damage

The correspondent may have made it back home physically safe but is marked from the terrible events they have experienced. Fear, incomprehension of the extreme and horrible savagery which a human being can do against another human being, are all wounds that heal very slowly, if ever.

### *Brief explanation*

Post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD, is a mental health condition that is caused and triggered by witnessing or experiencing alarming events such as war for example. The symptoms generally include nightmares, severe anxiety and flashbacks from the event.



The majority of people who go through these kinds of traumatic events may have difficulty coping with it, but after some time, and good self-care, they can get better. But if the symptoms don't stop, or even get worse and interfere with the everyday life, they may have post-traumatic stress disorder.

In the year 2003, a survey found out, that more than a quarter of war correspondents struggle with PTSD. The bigger the risk of violence, suffering and death, involving children or younger victims, the more likely people are to break down and to suffer from PTSD. And those kinds of situations are exactly what the majority of war correspondents have to go through as part of their job.

## 6. Ethics in war journalism

When a war correspondent goes into a war and crisis zone, he or she is tied to their choices about how exactly they do their work. Reporting on conflict contributes the greatest ethical challenge a correspondent can face. They find themselves in difficult moral and safety dilemmas and inner conflicts where their choices may not only be a matter of truth or lies, but also one of life or death. The only thing they can rely on is a “code of ethics” which are loosely tied to “the five core principles of journalism” (see page 4)

The first and golden rule of war journalism is that you shall do no harm. The job of a war correspondent is to spread awareness about conflicts and not harm people with their work. And therefore, these ethical codes exist, to prevent or limit harm as much as possible. This involves a couple of different ways, for example the withholding of some very important details like names of crime victims, or information that might harm some one's reputation in some way.

### 6.1 What happens if you don't respect those codes?

Sadou Yehia is a Malian man who was interviewed by the French 24 network and was murdered subsequently. Yehia was murdered by Malian militants in February 2020 for denouncing the terrorists live on air. The fatal mistake made by the network was that the face of the young man was clearly recognisable which cost him his life. The militants surpassingly arrived shortly after the broadcast ended, shot him twice and threatened to burn down the village as Sadou Yehia bled out.

These are some consequences that show how important it is to anonymise people who risk their life by giving out important information, especially when you're in a conflict area where the probability that something bad might happen is even higher.

The ethical codes try to ensure the reliability of reported information by providing guidelines for circumstances to avoid compromising the reliability of the reported information. They guidelines exist to help journalists to identify and solve ethical dilemmas. However, they are really hard to follow when you're in an intense situation.

## 6.2 Examples of ethical dilemmas

Ethical dilemmas vary from sensitive issues of national security to publishing a personal opinion on a topic. One of the most common ethical dilemmas is the conflict of interest. Objectivity and neutrality, news stories should be reported objectively and without any trace of personal interest that could influence the report in any way. But what if you are assigned to a story about a conflict that has touched you personally. For example, you are to report on the conflict between ISIS and Syrian government forces, and a member of your family has been killed by one of the two. In that kind of situation, it is very hard and virtually impossible to stay objective and not let your emotions get involved.

## 6.3 Show death and suffering?

War journalism sometimes has modesty, but also the fear of showing the war as it is. Is it to respect the sensitivity of the viewers? In these kinds of choices there are moral concerns, but also political positions. The dignity of the profession is undoubtedly expressed in respect for the victims.

Of course, a correspondent can use the five core principles as some sort of guide, but he or she should not be tied to them too much. They need know for themselves if it is alright to take a picture of a child crying over the dead body of his parents. This makes it so hard for a war correspondent, because it is their job to tell the truth that needs to be heard, but how can you do that if you're not able to publish most of the things you see or capture on your camera.



## 7. Notable war journalists

### 7.1 Marie Colvin

Marie Colvin was born January 12th, 1956 in Queens, New York. Before she started her career as a war correspondent, Colvin worked for a labour union in New York. In 1985, she started working to “The Sunday Times”, a British daily newspaper that is based in London. She worked as the newspaper’s “Middle East correspondent” in 1986 and interviewed the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi during her time in Libya. In 1995 she became the “Foreign Affairs correspondent” where she covered conflicts in Chechnya, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and East Timor. Throughout her career she reported from the front lines of numerous wars and was even awarded for her bravery, skill and compassion. She received awards like the “Courage in Journalism Award”, “The British Press Award” and the “Foreign Press International Journalist of the Year Award”. Marie’s motivation to risk her life was to open the eyes of the public and raise awareness about the

atrocities and terrors of the war. Colvin is famous for wearing a black eyepatch and being fearless and brave. She lost her right eye as she was struck by an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) in Sri Lanka in April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Marie Colvin



died on February 22, 2012 in Homs, Syria by an airstrike targeted by the Syrian Government. In Homs there was an armed confrontation between Syria’s Assad troops and the Syrian opposition, and Colvin was there alongside the French photojournalist Remi Ochlik to report on the thousands of innocent civilians being killed every day in Syria.

## 7.2 Clarissa Ward

Clarissa Ward is a famous award-winning foreign television correspondent. Ward was born in London on January 30, 1980 and spent her early years there and in New York and later on studied at Yale University. Clarissa Ward began her career at Fox News, then moved on to ABC and CBS before changing to CNN as an international foreign correspondent.

Ward has reported all over the world in crisis zones like Syria risking her life in gunfire bombs, and even confronted a jihadist who had supposedly killed prisoners he claimed to be protecting. Ward reported in Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Georgia and even in Japan.

During her career Ward has won five Emmy Awards, two George Foster Peabody Awards, an Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Award, two Edward R. Murrow Awards for distinguished journalism, honours from the Radio and Television Correspondents' Association, the 2016 David Kaplan Award from the Overseas Press Club, and the Excellence in International Reporting Award from the International Centre for Journalists.

Clarissa Ward is currently CNN's chief international correspondent and is the au-

thor of the upcoming book 'On All Fronts: The Education of a Journalist' where she describes her life on the fronts of numerous wars as a conflict reporter.



### 7.3 James Foley

James Foley was born October 18, 1973 in America and was a freelance war correspondent for GlobalPost, reporting from the most violent conflict regions. He accompanied US soldiers in Afghanistan, reported on the coup in Libya and documented brutality and suffering in the Syrian civil war.

Foley was kidnapped twice during his career, once in Libya where fighters of the current dictator Muammar Gaddafi had kidnapped him and two of his colleagues and held them hostage for 44 days. The other time he was kidnapped by the Islamic State (ISIS), when he left an internet café together with his translator and another journalist John Cantlie. The two journalists were kidnapped in the northwest of Syria as they were on their way to the Turkish border on November 22, 2012. The translator was not kidnapped or harmed in any way.

James Foley was held captive nearly two years until his execution on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Foley's location was unknown until ISIS uploaded a video to YouTube with the caption "A Message to America". The video was promptly taken down by YouTube but it continued to circulate on other pages throughout the internet. In the video one could see a man in an orange tracksuit (James Foley) and two members of ISIS wearing black clothes, decapitating the journalist. Foley was 40 years when he was murdered.



## 8. The Digitalisation of war journalism

### 8.1 The Internet and how war journalism has changed.

Journalism has changed a lot in the past thirty years, and much of the change is because of the invention of the Internet and the acceleration of social medias like Facebook, Twitter or even Instagram.

In 1991 the world wide web became available for the public to use, and since then journalism in general but also war journalism has changed drastically. During the Vietnam War (1955-1975) war correspondents used to type their reports on typewriters. A correspondent's report took approximately about 36 to 72 hours to reach the news programs. Now a days, the reports and images of war and crisis are being live broadcasted on the TV and you are even able to follow the news on your phone.

But how we receive the information is not the only thing that has changed over the past few years. The internet gives the audience the possibility to become journalists themselves. People can now publish articles and their opinions on the topic over social media without ever setting a foot in a crisis zone. This "modification" of modern journalism is erasing the fine line between who is a legit journalist and who isn't. And so, determining what is "fake news" has become increasingly more difficult, and a great danger to both journalism and even society because it might in some cases provoke conflict and war.

#### 8.1.1 How social media impact war journalism

War correspondents are very important in raising awareness of the terrible outcome of wars, and have the important role of influencing the communities in those wars, potentially even prevent them. However, this role is threatened, as targeted attacks by rebel militias and governments have reduced the number of correspondents willing to work in war and crisis zones. In the past few years, the middle east has become the most dangerous place to operate in as a war journalist. This leaves social media like Facebook, Twitter and others to replace the lack of information. But how does this impact and influence the news we as the audience receive about the ongoing wars and conflicts?

As we will see below, social medias both have positive as well as negative sides to the use of spreading information about political topics such as wars.

### 8.1.2 Social media as a weapon in modern war

The disinformation and so called “fake news” can be used as political weapons that serve as propaganda to manipulate people into joining terrorist organizations like ISIS. Social medias are no longer just platforms that serve as connection under mutual friends but is used by political parties to spread disinformation about one another. When people talk about “fake news”, they often think about the political campaign trying to influence its civilians’ views on the political parties.

#### *Upsides of social media use in war*

Social media has permitted people to become much more involved and aware of conflict situations that they otherwise maybe never would have known about. The use of social media can expose the horrors of war and therefore influence people’s opinions on political conflicts and maybe even reduce the risks of it happening again. It gives us the opportunity to see things from another perspective and helps us develop a critical mind. In conflicts, social media makes communication easier, which can be an upside as well as a downside.

#### *Downsides of social media use in war*

While the use of social media can be used positively, it also has some downsides to it. Social media can be used to spread information about certain topics, like war for example. However, the use of spreading information can also be used to manipulate people and their point of views towards a topic. The information that the civilians get a bout the war could be unreliable, and they wouldn’t know if it’s true or false. Social medias can also be used to spread propaganda, for example, if one side is at war with the other, both sides can benefit from the platforms to spread false information about the other and so gain support for their own cause.

### 8.1.3 ISIS Propaganda and recruitment strategy on social media

The “Islamic State in Syria and Iraq” is one of the main sources of problems, in Syria as well as in Iraq. ISIS becomes a problem not only for the Middle East but also for the rest of the world, as the Caliphate ( the political and religious state of the Muslim community ) attracts young people from all over the world to join the war. Social media can be used as an extremely dangerous but effective tool of war, with its capability to shape public opinion and communication networks that allow people to interact with each other without needing to be in the same place.

ISIS’s media campaign is divided into two different campaigns. The first campaign is the one that takes care of the big announcements and is called the “Al-Hayat” Media. Al-Hayat targets foreign and non-Arabic countries. The second campaign is the “Wilayat” campaign, which means authoritative, they are responsible for informational material about regional issues and events. The third campaign are the members and supporters of ISIS who have their own accounts on social media and try to infiltrate themselves and win support for the caliphate from the foreign population.

ISIS’s goal is to recruit foreign fighters to join the war and further complicate things for their enemies. They fulfil that particular goal through radicalization. The media campaign has a double purpose, it is used to attract people and to create hate and fear. ISIS members use social media to post pictures showing the organisation to be an idealistic place and so push foreign people to “hijra”, which is the migration to the caliphate for Allah. ISIS posts mass executions and torture to frighten and provoke the enemies of the caliphate.



## 9. The Syrian Civil War

The Syrian war plays an essential role in modern journalism as it is one of the first wars to be fought not only on the fronts and in the news but also on the social medias like Facebook or Instagram.

### 9.1 The historical context of the conflict

Syria has been ruled by a single political party known as the Ba'ath Party for over 40 years. Since then there have been only two rulers, Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad. But when Hafez al-Assad died in the year 2000, power the passed on to his son Bashar al-Assad who still rules to this day. The Assad family belongs to the so-called Alawite faith. However, the Alawites are a minority in Syria and so the majority of the population was suppressed by the reign of the regime. People were kidnapped, detained, tortured, killed and some suffered from hunger and poverty. Therefore, a large part of the population in Syria was dissatisfied with the government and wanted change. But anyone who spoke out publicly against the government was in danger of being put in prison or even killed. Many Syrians longed for more freedom, democracy and better living conditions. In 2011, when the people finally had enough, they



went out on the streets to protest the dictatorial government. When Assad brutally struck the non-violent demonstrations down, the Free Syrian Army was founded. It started to fight Assad with counter violence which resulted in a large number of armed groups in Syria now wanting to gain political power. They are at war against Assad, but also against each other, which turns nearly all of Syria into a warzone. People are losing their friends, children and parents and all we (the western countries) can do is to sit back and watch these terrible events take place on our TV screens.

### 9.1 The most memorable pictures of the Syrian war

In this disturbing and mentally exhausting picture we can see a Syrian man crying out while holding the dead body of his beloved brother. The picture was taken near Dar al-Shifa hospital in Aleppo, Syria, by Manu Brabo, a Spanish war correspondent on October 11, 2012. These specific pictures described the sheer sadness of war. This picture was taken by Manu Brabo.



In this image we can see Syrian military forces standing guard as one single medic carries a body found in Jisr al Shugur on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This is the result of 120 policemen allegedly massacred in the town by armed terrorist groups. The bodies were found under a big pile of garbage. The U.N Commission of Inquiry reacted to the picture and released a report saying fighters on all the sides in Syria's civil war have committed horrible war crimes and should be brought to justice. This picture was taken by Louai Beshara, AFP



This picture shows three Syrian security agents carrying a body after a explosion from a car bomb in the middle of central Damascus, Syria on the 21th February 2013. The photo was released by the official news agency SANA (Syrian Arab Nrews Agency). Car bomb attacks are one of the primary attack strategies of Syrian rebels as it is hard to track and notice. Car bombs kill innocent people every day even if there are targeting Syrian government forces. The main issue is that the explosion is uncontrollably, and the flames can reach trees and houses due to the wind which can cause housefires too.



In this photo we can see a man checking a woman's pulse after an explosion in a security checkpoint in Damascus. The attack was blamed on armed rebel militias considered as terrorists by the Assad regime. The picture was taken on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2013 by the official news agency SANA and was taken in the same place as the picture above.



In this picture we can see the lifeless body of a dark-haired child wearing a red T shirt and shorts washed up face down on a beach in Turkey. According to numerous official news agencies, the boy was one of twelve refugees who lost their lives by drowning. Within hours, this specific picture with the caption “humanity washed ashore” had gone viral all over the world. It is a picture everyone who follows the news has seen.

This photo went viral because it visualizes the sheer risk refugees take to reach the west hoping for a better and safer life. The picture was taken by Turkish journalist Nilüfer Demir.



### 9.3 Freelance journalism in Syria

Correspondents adapt to the dangerous situations in conflict areas. Most major international media are now rarely sending correspondents to Syria unless they have an official permit to go to Damascus (which is very difficult for western journalists to get their hands on). Instead they rely on the growing number of freelance journalists on site.

Freelance journalists do not work for only one media, they are self-employed. A freelance journalist is like a normal journalist, with the only difference that freelance journalists can choose who they work for, and what they want to write about, which makes them independent.

### 9.4 Citizen Journalists

Because of the very limited access to foreign media in Syria, more and more citizens turn to news over social media. Although the Syrian civil war isn't the first war where foreign media is being restricted, it is one of the first wars where the actions are being documented by civilians and later on posted on social media. This confidence in citizen journalists comes not only from the regime's refusal to interact with western journalists, as well as the result from media activists, to bring the outside world to Syria and sort of promote an intervention by other countries like America.

### 9.5 Syria the most dangerous country for correspondents?

The conditions in which war correspondents have to work in Syria are very bad, the odds of being killed or kidnapped are high and numerous rebel militias and terror organisations are targeting journalists.

President Bashar al-Assad was the first representative of Syria on the list of the world's greatest enemies of press freedom, which "Reporters Without Borders" publish annually on May 3 on the International Press Freedom Day. Since the beginning of the protests against the regime, Assad has unscrupulously relied on detention, torture and legal shootings to keep the voices of correspondents and journalists silent.

In 2013, apart from Assad, the al-Nusra jihadists were included in the list of press freedom enemies. Since its founding in 2011, the group's goal is not only the fall of Assad, but also the establishment and creation of an Islamic caliphate. The organisation made a name for itself through the persecution of Syrian and foreign journalists. In the year of 2013, the group declared its affiliation with al-Qaeda.

In 2014, ISIS was included in the ranks of the enemies of press freedom. The jihadist group is a branch of al-Qaeda and is active in Iraq and especially in the "liberated" areas in northern Syria, primarily in Al-Rakka, Idlib and Aleppo regions. ISIS is now responsible for most attacks against the civilian population and also against journalists.



## 10. Do not try this at home! (practical work)

For my practical work I decided I would do an interview with a foreign correspondent who has experience in conflict zones so that I could get personal information about how you feel in these kind of situations and what you see on your trips to a conflict area. A few years back, when I was in 4ième, I did an internship at RTL Télé Letzebuerg in Kirchberg. I contacted my former “patron de stage” and asked if he could give me any information on war journalism. He answered promptly and suggested I contact two people; Patrick Bartz, who is a freelance foreign correspondent and has experience in Syria, and Morgan Doux, who is a French freelance journalist but worked for TF1 in the middle east during 2014 and 2016.

I contacted Patrick Bartz and explained my mission. I asked him if I could interview him about his experience as a foreign conflict reporter and he accepted.

### 10.1 Patrick (Petz) Bartz

Patrick Bartz is a freelance foreign correspondent working for RTL who has experience in conflict zones like Syria and parts of Africa. After he graduated from studying journalism in Brussels, he became more and more interested in geopolitics with a focus on Africa, but later on also in the Middle East. On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Petz Bartz travelled to Syria with the goal to interview a Luxemburgish man from Meespelt suspected of being part of ISIS, Steve Duarte.



The interview with Patrick Bartz was really interesting because he explained a lot about how to prepare yourself before going to a conflict area. When I did my research, I mostly found all the preparation programs you can do and how you prepare yourself mentally. Bartz however, explained that of course those programs are important to see how you react in intense situations but that the crucial part of the preparation is your research on that specific country. As a war correspondent it is essential that you know the political and historical background of the country you're going to. In addition, you should find out how you can create contacts with local people and a good "fixer" who know their way around and have lived through the situation, which gives you the opportunity to get personal information about the conflict on how it influences the everyday life of the people living in that particular area.



When I asked him about his expectations towards Syria, he explained that ideally a correspondent shouldn't have any expectations at all, because when you have expectations towards something, you have a specific goal in your head which you are trying to work up to. When you are in a conflict area, things rarely turn out the way you want them to and the situation is always unpredictable - anything can happen.

Bartz explained that his motivation to risk his life as a war correspondent comes from various factors. But most importantly, he does his job, he wanted to find out why exactly the civil war in Syria is happening. There are way more innocent victims who probably just were at the wrong place at the wrong time, and they didn't risk their lives. He just wants to know the issue between the middle east and the west.

Patrick Bartz travelled to Syria illegally because a western journalist wouldn't get a permission to work as the West is considered as enemies to the Assad regime. He travelled to Iraq and met his "fixer" there, and later continued to the Syrian border and crossed the "Tigris" river over to Syria. The "fixer" arranged for them to sleep in local people's houses for a few dollars a night. They changed their location every night and only travelled throughout the day for safety reasons. Bartz only travelled with his "fixer" and the driver, which means that he had to film everything on his own and do the reporting. He explained that it was a mentally exhausting experience, as he was an easy target with a camera on one side and because he was blind on one eye when he looked through the camera lens, and on the other side because he had to focus on two things (the camera and the interviews).

When they reached the Syrian prison where the alleged Luxemburgish ISIS member supposedly was stationed, they were sent to another prison. When Bartz asked what that was all about, the guard explained that they do it for a safety reason, for the case that Patrick Bartz was there to free Steve Duarte (the alleged ISIS member).



When I asked Petz what it felt like to interview Steve Duarte, he answered that he just had one thought in mind, "don't scare away the interviewee". Steve Duarte accepted the interview as it was voluntarily and could just have walked away whenever he felt like it. Bartz explained that whenever he felt that Steve Duarte was getting nervous and couldn't answer at the questions, he said

something to comfort him and make him stay. For example, he asked him if he wanted to say something to his mother (who still lives in Luxemburg) which calmed him down again.

## 10.2 Morgan Doux

Morgan Doux is now a freelance camera journalist working for RTL Télé Letzebuerg as well as multiple other medias in France. During the years of 2014 to 2016, Doux flew out to the Middle East and worked as a correspondent in Syria, Iraq and Israel. Morgan Doux is a “camera journalist”, a correspondent who does filming with the camera as well as the interviews like a correspondent. In the year 2015, he did a report about the conflict with ISIS in Kobane, Syria and was rewarded with the prize for the best journalistic coup by CB-News.

Morgan Doux travelled to the Middle East without any experience in this type of work. He didn't participate in any classes simply because of the shortage of time. He flew out to Israel with another French correspondent working for TF1 who had some experience in warzones. The first thing he made clear was that you should never travel to conflict areas without out any experience or company who has experience

Like Patrick Bartz, Morgan Doux managed to get into Syria illegally because they otherwise never would have gotten permission. Doux



travelled to the Turkish Syrian border near Kobane with his “fixer”, where they managed to cross the border. Morgane Doux traveled to Syria with the goal to report about the conflict between ISIS and the Syrian army.

One of my questions in the interview was if he had any special memories that particularly moved or shocked him. He answered with two both moving and disturbing stories.

The first one was in Kameron, where he filmed in a refugee camp for people who were religiously prosecuted by “Boko Haram” (the Islamic State in West Africa). In Kameron, a country where living conditions aren't good with a shortage on food, water and hygiene these people live in fear

of being caught and traumatized by the things they've experienced. Morgan Doux walked through this camp seeing the frustration written in the faces of these people, and all of a sudden, he hears singing. Doux makes his way through the camp to find a group of women sitting in a circle and singing joyfully. This incidence taught him a very valuable life lesson. Even in the most desperate of times, people are capable of seeing the good in a situation that seems hopeless.

The second story he told me was disturbing and illustrates how terrible and brutal war can be. When Doux travelled to Kobane, a city in Syria close to the Turkish border to report about the conflict between ISIS and the Syrian army, he walked through the ruins of the city and stumbled across a stray dog eating the corpse of a man lying in the dirt. He said to himself "what have we done to get here".

In 2016, Doux's former "fixer", which in the eyes of Morgan Doux was a very experienced and careful person, died by stepping on a mine while leading a French journalist team. This specific incident made him realize that life is precious and in a conflict area death can catch up to you wherever and whenever, you just have to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Morgan Doux thought that if an experienced and careful man like the Turkish "fixer" dies, it would hit him too

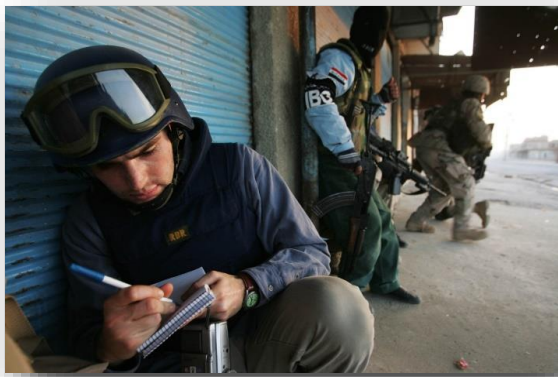


eventually. This was the reason Morgan Doux quit his job as a conflict correspondent and made it back to Europe.

When I asked it him if he ever would do it again, he explained that in the conditions he travelled to Syria illegally, probably not, but he is happy that he made this experience.

## 11. Conclusion

In this paper, I have learned a lot about how correspondents and journalists work in conflict areas, how they prepare themselves and how they protect themselves. Even though the war wasn't my main subject I completely changed my point of view towards war and especially the Syrian civil war. I have always been interested in history and wars like the Second World War or the Vietnam, but during the writing of this paper it was the first time I really got confronted with the horrors and reality of the war as the Syrian civil war is the latest and best documented over social media.



I've learned a lot about the evolution of journalism due to the invention of the internet and social media, and due to this paper, I've come to the conclusion that journalism is changing and so is the way we see and consume it. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram all types of social media have become a major source of news

for younger people in the past years and is changing the way we receive news. Our future society will be even more confronted with news as well as "fake news". It is crucial that kids in their early years learn how to critically overthink most of the things that they are being told so that they can make the difference between correct and incorrect information.

Furthermore, I'm really happy that I was able to get an interview with two journalists who both have experience in conflict situations in the Middle East and parts of Africa. These interviews enabled me to get ahold of personal information that I otherwise never would have found on the internet.

As a conclusion, I can say that it definitely takes a lot more to be a war correspondent than I thought and expected. You have to be physically as well as mentally fit for this challenging experience.

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