

The unlucky tribe. Transformations and challenges of conflict journalism in Spain

La tribu sin suerte. Transformaciones y retos del periodismo de conflicto en España

A tribo sem sorte. Transformações e desafios do jornalismo de conflitos na Espanha

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ABSTRACT | The article delves into the main transformations that conflict journalism has undergone in the last century and a half and tries to identify the challenges it faces today. To this end, in addition to an extensive bibliographical review of academic works, biographies and books published by journalists, we conducted 24 in-depth interviews with professionals with experience in conflict coverage, the heads of the international sections of several Spanish newspapers, and military personnel with experience in managing public information in operations and in security training for journalists. The conclusions include, on the one hand, the impact that conflict coverage has achieved beyond the media and the role of technology as a transforming element of professional profiles and practice. All of this in a context of increasing danger in the profession and the precariousness of journalism, also in conflict zones, leaving behind the myth of the war correspondent and posing new challenges such as the approach to the issue of security, the inclusion of the gender perspective in this field, or the end of the taboo of post-traumatic stress syndrome..

KEYWORDS: war journalism; peace journalism; journalist safety; PTSD; women journalists; conflict reporting.

HOW TO CITE

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RESUMEN | *El artículo ahonda en las principales transformaciones que el periodismo de conflicto ha vivido en el último siglo y medio y trata de identificar los retos a los que se enfrenta en la actualidad. Para ello, además de una amplia revisión bibliográfica a trabajos académicos, biografías o libros publicados por periodistas, se han realizado 24 entrevistas en profundidad a profesionales con experiencia en la cobertura de conflictos, responsables de la sección internacional de varios diarios españoles, y a militares con experiencia en gestión de información pública en operaciones y en formación en materia de seguridad para periodistas. Entre las conclusiones destacan, por un lado, el impacto que la cobertura de conflictos ha logrado más allá de los medios y el rol de la tecnología como elemento transformador de los perfiles y la práctica profesional. Todo esto, en un contexto de aumento de la peligrosidad de la profesión y de la precarización del periodismo, también en zonas de conflicto, dejando atrás el mito del corresponsal de guerra y planteando nuevos retos, como el abordaje de la cuestión de la seguridad, la inclusión de la perspectiva de género en este ámbito o el fin del tabú que constituye el síndrome del estrés postraumático.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *periodismo de guerra; periodismo de paz; seguridad de periodistas; PTSD; mujeres periodistas; reportaje de conflicto.*

RESUMO | *Este artigo aprofunda as principais transformações que o jornalismo de conflitos sofreu no último século e meio, e tenta identificar os desafios que enfrenta atualmente. Para o efeito, além de uma extensa revisão bibliográfica de trabalhos acadêmicos, biografias e livros publicados por jornalistas, foram realizadas 24 entrevistas aprofundadas a profissionais com experiência na cobertura de conflitos, responsáveis das secções internacionais de vários jornais espanhóis, e pessoal militar com experiência na gestão de informação pública em operações e na formação de segurança para jornalistas. As conclusões incluem, por um lado, o impacto que a cobertura de conflitos alcançou para além dos meios de comunicação e o papel da tecnologia como elemento transformador dos perfis e a prática profissional. Tudo isto, num contexto de perigo crescente da profissão e na precariedade do jornalismo, também em zonas de conflito, deixando para trás o mito do correspondente de guerra e colocando novos desafios, tais como a abordagem da questão da segurança, a inclusão da perspectiva do género neste campo ou o fim do tabu da síndrome do estresse pós-traumático.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *jornalismo de guerra; jornalismo de paz; segurança jornalística; PTSD; mulheres jornalistas; reportagem de conflitos.*

INTRODUCTION

The work of journalists in conflict zones has been an issue of great attraction for the academic field. Since the appearance of what is considered to be the first unarmed war correspondent linked to a media outlet (Knightley, 2004), communications in the context of warfare have changed considerably. In the 19th century American Civil War, the telegraph became a basic tool for military coordination (Hagerman, 1992), and with the use of the telephone and radio in World War I (Dávila Loor, 1995) the accessibility of information on conflicts improved considerably (Sahagún, 2004).

Photographs that were first used to transmit local information date back to the Crimean War, in 1860. Until then, images of conflict zones were focused on military uses (Ramonet, 1997); it is in the African campaign, in 1859-1860, where the first Spanish correspondent sent to the front by a media outlet made his debut (Martínez Salazar, 1997).

In recent decades, the presence of journalists in conflict zones has grown significantly (Tumber, 2006), as has the diversity of profiles that can be found among them. Two prominent phenomena are the increase of freelancers (Horowitz et al., 2005; Templeman, 2016; Massey & Elmore, 2018), with some authors pointing it out as an economic survival tactic of news companies (Istek, 2017), and the hiring of local journalists covering the conflict for foreign media (Høiby & Ottosen, 2015).

All this, amidst a context of increasing dangerousness for these professionals (Harris & Williams, 2018). According to data from the Committee to Protect Journalists (n. d.), in 2021 27 journalists were killed while reporting from different parts of the world, a slightly lower figure than the previous year (32 journalists). As of August 2022, according to the real-time barometer of Reporters Without Borders (<https://rsf.org/es/barometro>)¹ the figure amounted to 32 journalists killed in 2022, eight of them since the start of the Ukrainian War last February 2022. The Madrid Press Association (Asociación de la prensa de Madrid, 2022) published the Reporters Without Borders' request to the contenders and international organizations to ensure the journalists safety, estimating that more than 1,000 professionals were accredited in the territory of the conflict at the end of February 2022.

1. Real-time barometer, last updated on August 4, 2022.

Conflict journalism's relevance: from solitary work with a pen and a notebook to affecting international politics

The Crimean War was a milestone in the history of conflict reporting. Up to that point, the battle story was a military expertise. In 1854, for the first time, a civilian, unarmed and linked to a medium, William Howard Russel, appeared on the scene (Knightley, 2004). Since then, the journalist who covers the information and dissemination of war conflicts has been called a war correspondent. Russel inspired, in turn, the emergence of military censorship as a reaction to a variable that was becoming part of the conflict's development: public opinion.

Since then, press management was incorporated into the design of the conflict's military and political strategy, both for its impact on the configuration of public opinion and for security reasons. Certainly, previous studies (Iturregui et al., 2014) reveal that the results of the previous confrontation have significantly conditioned the criteria to address the organization and management of the press in a conflict.

It is believed that it is especially after the Cold War, in the 1990s, and in the Gulf, Balkan, and Sub-Saharan African conflicts that "the new balances between public opinion, media, and political elites, epicenters of the political communication process and real challenges to the information management policies of Western states, became evident" (García Marín, 2011, p. 120). The first Gulf War is precisely considered as the turning point in the history of communication, when CNN emerges as a global actor in international relations, in what has been defined as CNN effect (Gilboa, 2005).

Therefore, efforts to control the presence and activity of journalists in conflict zones have been a central issue, in which the United States has exercised unparalleled leadership in designing the procedures for coverage and access of the press to the battlefield during the most media-rich conflicts of the last century and the current one (Iturregui, 2011). The reaction of the journalistic profession, somewhere between adaptation and rebellion to the imposed measures, has contributed not only to the achievement of a public opinion with critical capacity, but, even, to save lives (Hilsum, 2018; Unesco, 2012), or to force the end of conflicts. All this has undoubtedly contributed to the mythification of the war correspondent who, however, has not always had the necessary support and recognition from the media companies for which he or she worked. This article reviews the main transformations that conflict journalism has undergone in the last century and a half, and tries to identify the challenges it faces today. To this end, it proposes:

1. An overview of the working and professional conditions under which conflict journalists work for the Spanish media.
2. To situate the role of technology as a transforming element of the conflict journalism profession
3. To review the role of the military in the profession of the conflict journalist and its implications.
4. To address the safety conditions in which Spanish conflict journalists work.
5. Highlight the role of female journalists in the profession.

METHODOLOGY

The article is based on a literature review and 24 in-depth interviews conducted from 2008 to 2022 with journalists with different years of experience in conflict coverage, military personnel, and heads of the international section of the Spanish media. The names have been anonymized to preserve their confidentiality. Therefore, each person interviewed has been assigned an acronym (from E1 to E24) for possible attributions.

| Code | Profession | Professional status | Experience | Gender |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------|--|--------|
| E1 | Journalist | Freelance | 16 years covering conflicts | Male |
| E2 | Journalist | Freelance | 8 years covering conflicts | Female |
| E3 | Journalist | Staff | 26 years covering international politics and conflicts | Female |
| E4 | Journalist | Staff | 25 years covering conflicts | Male |
| E5 | Journalist | Staff | 23 years in sports and 7 in international journalism | Male |
| E6 | Cameraman | Staff | 31 years covering conflicts | Male |
| E7 | Journalist | Staff | 27 years covering international politics and conflicts | Male |
| E8 | Serves in the army | Public information officer | 25 years as PIO in international conflicts | Male |
| E9 | Journalist | Freelance | 10 years covering conflicts for national and international media | Female |
| E10 | Journalist | Freelance | More than 11 years covering conflicts for national and international media | Male |
| E11 | Photojournalist | Freelance | 9 years covering conflicts for national and international media | Male |

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--------|
| E12 | Journalist | Freelance | More than 15 years covering conflicts for national and international media | Male |
| E13 | Journalist | Responsible for international section | 9 years in charge of the international section | Female |
| E14 | Journalist | Responsible for international section | 10 years in charge of the international section | Male |
| E15 | Journalist | Responsible for international section | 11 years in charge of the international section and 5 as international correspondent | Male |
| E16 | Journalist | Responsible for international section | 12 in charge of the international section | Male |
| E17 | Journalist | Responsible for international section | More than 2 years in charge of the international section | Male |
| E18 | Photojournalist | Freelance | 2 years covering conflicts | Male |
| E19 | Journalist | Freelance | 10 years covering conflicts | Female |
| E20 | Journalist | Staff | 20 years covering conflicts and international information | Female |
| E21 | Journalist | Staff | 21 years covering conflicts and international information | Female |
| E22 | Journalist | Staff | 8 years covering conflicts, terrorism and international information | Female |
| E23 | Journalist | Staff | 12 years covering international and military information | Female |
| E24 | Serves in the army | Lieutenant Colonel | Más de 15 years in journalism training | Male |

Table 1. List of people interviewed

Source: Own elaboration based on the outlines proposed in Iturregui et al. (2020) and Lee et al. (2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

War correspondents: the precariousness behind the legend

Journalistic precarity is considered one of the main current challenges of the profession (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019). It has “have come to define the lived experience for many inside the contemporary newsroom” (Deuze & Witschge, 2018, p. 171), as even those who continue to work in newsrooms have suffered worsening conditions. Unesco identifies among the keys to the exercise of conflict journalism whether “the terms of engagement of journalists (including freelancers) are fair, including with respect to safety and personal risk” (Unesco,

2015, p. 21). In the Spanish case, precarity is an endemic evil of the journalistic profession (Iturregui et al., 2020). In conflict journalism, several works point to an increase of freelance professionals as opposed to the war correspondent of the last century, who was part of the staff of State media (Díez Barriuso, 2017); Iraq 2003 constituted a milestone in this regard. The death of journalist Julio Anguita Parrado and cameraman José Couso caused a special commotion in Spain: the Federation of Journalists' Unions (FeSP, by its Spanish acronym) publicly denounced that the situation of both workers was not what they were entitled to, and from that moment the change in the agreements and statutes of the companies was "radical" (E6 and E7, personal communication, March 2008).

Historically, a distinction has been made between the "quality media or 'elite press' according to the level of their correspondents around the world" (Expósito, 2011, p. 89); however, the picture is no longer so clear, at least in the Spanish media. The same author, director of the newspaper *ABC*, recognized that "sending a journalist to Afghanistan is as expensive as it is dangerous. Materials, insurance, per diems" (Expósito, 2011, p. 89). The reduction of correspondents in Spain is considered of such magnitude that there are authors who point to a possible disappearance of the correspondent figure (Sahagún, 2013). The media professionals interviewed recognize that they do not invest as much as they should in international information, and admit that, although it is not the section that most attracts the audience if it is not a breaking news conflict or one with global repercussions (Jaraba Molina et al., 2020), it does bring "prestige" to the newspaper: "I think that international information is a way of giving prestige to the media. That people see that on the other side of the world you have a person reporting is a plus and adds quality" (E13, personal communication, May 4, 2019).

Evidently, hiring freelance journalists as opposed to war correspondents is an opportunity for the media to save labor costs (Henry, 2013). Although after Iraq many of the companies' agreements were improved, there was also an increase in the hiring of freelance professionals, with experience and great field knowledge, in agreements in which the media assume practically no cost beyond the price they pay for the news piece (Iturregui, 2011). The only report with the rates that Spanish media offer to freelance journalists was published by the National Confederation of Workers (Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores, 2017, 2018), and amounts ranging from 15 euros per reportage to 450.

In order to achieve decent conditions, most journalists choose to work for different media, print, digital, radio, or television; they assume the contents of their personal or professional blogs: they are multimedia journalists. The journalists insist that "there is no other option" than working for several media

(independently) when it comes to covering conflicts: “Nowadays there is almost no possibility of being in a media outlet and being sent [to cover a conflict]. That is an option that you only have with an agency. And it is not even sure” (E10, personal communication, June 5, 2019).

Technology as a transforming element of professional practice and skills

The evolution of technology has been a crucial element in journalistic work, especially in conflict zones (Armoudian, 2016). From Crimea (1854) to Iraq (1991), news went from arriving 10 days late to being broadcast live (Sahagún, 2004). The arrival of the Internet also triggered the updating of the professional skills that journalists must acquire to inform the public, as well as in newsrooms and in the news production or newsmaking process. A revolution that, undoubtedly, also reached war correspondents and has caused the major media to require them to use these new channels and narratives to reach the public (Lavín de las Heras & Römer Pieretti, 2015).

This is recognized by all the journalists interviewed, who have felt the need to adapt to write for both written and audiovisual media, to train for radio and television broadcasting, as well as in video editing and post-production. Interviewee E9 emphasizes the transformation of the figure of the correspondent since, as she mentions, 15 or 20 years ago these professionals covered conflicts accompanied by a cameraman and a producer. On the other hand, “now one person has to be able to do everything: record, edit, send the material, do television and radio at the same time, etc. Being multidisciplinary is necessary” (E9, personal communication, May 3, 2019).

Furthermore, the use of social networks has generated changes in both sources and information channels. Spanish journalists have begun to use social networks as a communication tool, especially Twitter (Rodríguez Ruibal & García López, 2013). Also, “the byline of their writings, usually in journalistic genres of opinion, is sometimes accompanied by their nickname on this social network, which causes it to become an advertising showcase of this social network and their own personal brand” (Rodríguez Ruibal & García López, 2013, p. 963), something that is considered as a “valuable strategy for journalists who want to remain on the Web with their credibility intact and a more dynamic, more agile and flexible professional projection with the Internet communication dynamics” (Noguera, 2012, p. 40). In the case of freelance journalists, this can determine their hiring, as they have recognized in the interviews: “As a freelancer, I spend a lot of time on social networks, as it helps to create my own ‘brand’. It is a way to share and keep my work present, a showcase” (E1, personal communication, May 2, 2019).

Relationship with the military: from inspiring censorship to (regulated) coexistence

The intermediary function traditionally exercised by journalists is currently in question in different areas (Macnamara, 2014; Iturregui et al., 2020), but their role in foreign policy (García Marín, 2011) or in conflict zones is still decisive in shaping public opinion, being considered as authors of a first draft of history (Hanitzsch & Hoxha, 2018).

Access to information and its management depends, to a large extent, on the systems of organization of journalists in conflict zones, designed mainly by the United States throughout history (Iturregui, 2011). Vietnam was a turning point in the relationship of trust between the military and journalists; from an almost absolute freedom of information (Leguineche & Sánchez, 2002), after the Tet Offensive, there was a generalized distancing and reproach synthesized by Michael Herr in his *Dispatches*, in a phrase repeated by officers: “My Marines are winning this war and you are losing it for us in your newspapers” (Herr, 1968). A deterioration of relations that has been described as a “trauma suffered by the White House’s strategists and publicists” that “not only definitively changed the way of making war but also the way in which they were going to allow it to be told” (Higueras, 2011, p. 25). The Falklands war was another milestone in this regard, with an army that applied “an iron control” of the journalists’ activity, who “had to learn to live with both textual and audiovisual control of everything they grasped” (Lavín & Gallardo-Camacho, 2017, p. 132). For the Gulf War, in 1991, “Pentagon strategists had already designed an action plan based on two pillars: zero casualties and zero freedom of information” (Higueras, 2011, p. 25). During that conflict, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney stated, “I don’t see the press as an asset. Honestly, I see it as a problem to be managed” (Katovsky & Carlson, 2004, p. 8). Veteran officials became particularly aware of the impact of television coverage on policy making, and CNN was described as the “sixteenth Security Council member” (Minear et al. (1996), cited in Gilboa, 2005, p. 28). In the Balkans there was greater freedom of information, “perhaps due to an unclear policy in the management of information by the main actors” (García Marín, 2011, p. 122), and the press was present everywhere (Suevos Barrero, 2003).

During the Iraq war, in 2003, the U.S. Department of Defense implemented the embedded system, which assigned journalists from all over the world to military units where they would remain, after signing a contract, in a co-habitation regime. The recovery of this coexistence was accompanied by rules and regulations contained in the document *Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding Media During Possible*

Future Operations/Deployments in the U.S. Central Commands Area of Responsibility, dated February 2003.

Several studies have examined the implications of this new formula for conflict coverage, which has now been adapted and consolidated. Certainly, it is recognized that the system offers the journalistic profession access to sources previously vetoed and to aspects that could not be covered before (Downie, 2003); it has even been described as the pinnacle of war reporting (Beckerman, 2007). There is some agreement that the embedded system has contributed to reestablish press-military relations after the breakup of Vietnam (Murphy, 2006) and, precisely, linked to this, the independence and objectivity of journalists adhering to this system have also been questioned (Knightley, 2004; Dillow, 2003; Avnery, 2003), as well as the use of the system as a tool of public diplomacy by governments and armed forces. However, what has been recognized –both by journalists and the media– is that it is the cheapest alternative to cover a conflict (Iturregui et al., 2016). In the background, latent, there is also the issue of security. On the one hand, the protection that the army can offer is recognized: “If we are honest, there is no other formula with certain security guarantees than that embedded either in peacekeeping missions or in any other type of military conflict. You cannot go on your own to certain operations places” (Expósito, 2011, p. 78). On the other hand, there is the risk of losing the non-combatant status that Article 79 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention grants to journalists “provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians” (CIRC, 1977). The journalists interviewed who have lived this experience recognize that the probabilities of being identified as part “of a side” increase when being embedded (E6, personal communication, March 2008).

(In)security as a core issue: increasing violence in a context of general neglect

Safety underlies all investigations and is crucial for the practice of the profession in conflict zones: “Unless they are safe, journalists cannot be expected to carry out their professional work” (Unesco, 2015, p. 3). Paradoxically, it has often been argued by the media that personal safety is the journalist’s responsibility, even though safe working conditions are crucial to be able to practice the profession and provide information safely to the audience (Høiby & Ottosen, 2015). In addition to external influences or censorship, journalists are also victims of personal and physical attacks, from kidnappings to disappearances, and in the worst cases, death. In recent years, they have also become direct targets of these attacks and, in the absence of a forceful response, the consequence is a lack of press freedom (Heyns & Srinivasan, 2013). However, the full commitment of the media is essential to ensure and guarantee minimum safety conditions for all professionals who belong to them (Chocarro Marcesse, 2017).

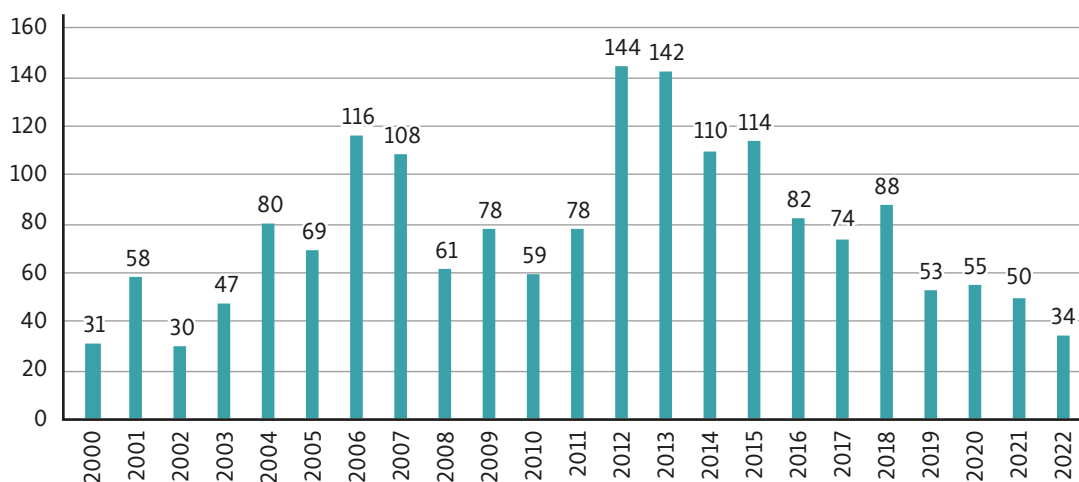


Figure 1. Evolution of the number of journalists killed in the last 22 years

Source: *Reporteros Sin Frontera* (<https://rsf.org/es/barometro>).

In the last decade, 942 journalists have been murdered while conducting their work (<https://rsf.org/es/barometro>). This figure is directly related to working and security conditions. In 2021, according to data published by Reporters Without Borders, 50 professionals were killed while reporting from different parts of the world. This is the lowest figure recorded since 2003.

Among the elements that make up the safety of journalists, first of all, training stands out (McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000); in Spain, this training task is almost exclusively assumed by the Army, through the War College (Iturregui et al., 2017). Most of the interviewees who have received training have indeed undertaken it on their own initiative: “I took the security and first aid courses on my own. The last one I did was in 2016 in Iraq through Freelance Frontline Register. These courses are very expensive as they offer survival kits as well” (E11, personal communication, April 29, 2019).

Secondly, equipment and insurance are also a vital issue. After the Iraq war, and following the controversy unleashed after the death of cameraman José Couso and journalist Julio Anguita Parrado in that territory (“Dos tragedias...”, 2018)², new insurances were created in Spain, daily allowances, and the media were provided with special safety equipment.

². José Couso was a cameraman for *Telecinco* in Spain and Julio Anguita Parrado, correspondent for the newspaper *El Mundo*. This same newspaper recalled in 2018 the 15 years of their deaths, 24 hours apart.

However, shortly afterwards, the hiring of freelance journalists to cover information in conflict zones became generalized in the Spanish media, leaving the progress achieved on a dead letter: the journalists assume their accommodation and subsistence costs, translations and necessary logistics, their work and security equipment and their life insurance (Iturregui, 2011). A situation that is maintained in the vast majority of cases today, as confirmed by the interviews, and which essentially contravenes each of the principles set out in statutes and manuals for conflict reporters: “I have never had insurance because I have not had the money to pay for it. Freelancing is a model of precarization of journalism, we do not have any kind of security condition” (E10, personal communication, June 5, 2019). This, among other issues, leads to these professionals having to take measures, decisions, and strategies of their own regarding their personal safety (Armoudian, 2016).

It is worth noting at this point that, in terms of both training and equipment, Unesco singles out the media as responsible for providing both “hostile environment and risk awareness training” and “adequate insurance and necessary equipment to those journalists working on dangerous assignments” (Unesco, 2015, p. 21).

Finally, an issue that has received little (almost no) attention from Spanish academia refers to the implications of working as a conflict journalist once back home: the so-called post-trauma or post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). Anthony Feinstein and colleagues conducted the first study on the effects of war on the psychological well-being of journalists that revealed that, while there is a long tradition of training in the military in dealing with violence, the situation is completely different for media professionals, although some progress is being made, and they point to a “culture of silence on the part of news bosses and the journalists themselves” (Feinstein et al., 2002, p. 1574; Feinstein, 2013; Feinstein & Starr, 2015).

Among conflict journalism professionals, this specialty is still considered a taboo subject (Hilsum, 2018). Among the Spanish journalists interviewed, this taboo is confirmed, and a great ignorance and lack of sensitivity in media management in this regard is admitted:

There are coverages that leave their mark; sometimes you don't notice it, but then you realize that they do. On one occasion I was on the verge of dying, it was very strong and hard for me personally. I did something good and that was to talk to my company, to demand that they improve our equipment, that they offer us training, etc. (E21, personal communication, March 5, 2021).

Likewise, different professional associations are beginning to warn of the need to address post-trauma management, not only in the case of journalists covering conflicts, but also for those who report on cases of gender violence or humanitarian dramas (Di Giovanni, 2020).

Women: incorporation, specific risks, sorority, post trauma

Women began covering conflicts in the 19th century, and in the 20th century the number of female journalists in conflicts increased with the emergence of World War I and World War II, but especially with the Vietnam War. In the 21st century, the reduction in the number of foreign press bureaus further encouraged the presence of women in this profession, creating the need for women journalists' work in many media outlets such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan (Steiner, 2017a).

During this period, a number of women have emerged as leaders in conflict reporting, such as Martha Gellhorn, Gloria Emerson, Clare Hollingworth, or Marie Colvin, although it is true that they have constituted a clear minority. The conflict journalism ecosystem has traditionally been dominated by men, so women who entered this profession for the first time had a hard time (Tumber, 2006). In addition, war reporting, along with sports, is one of the most sexist areas (Steiner, 2017b). Regarding conflict and war coverage, authors such as Sreberny (2014) emphasize different additional violence suffered by women journalists in conflict situations and zones, as “unfortunately they are a specific focus of violence” (Sreberny, 2014, p. 35).

It is important to note that women in this profession have faced sexism, starting with military hostility, continuing with media leaders, and ending with the gaze of peers as well as the public (Steiner, 2017b). This is acknowledged by some of the female journalists interviewed: “The world of conflict is very masculine. In conflicts, in any conflict, women are not in the front line and it is true that there are times when you are a bit trapped. For example, you get caught up with a Syrian militia and you take every precaution. They are not supposed to do anything to you, but you can't trust them” (E21, personal communication, March 5, 2021).

The gender perspective is increasingly present in research on conflict and security reporting by journalists (Von Der Lippe & Ottosen, 2016; Fröhlich, 2016), and also in Spain, studies on their profiles, their presence in conflict zones, or the specific difficulties they suffer in their professional practice have increased in recent years (Del Paso, 2018; Jar Couselo, 2009; Bernárdez Rodal, 2013).

However, some of the issues directly affecting women journalists remain unaddressed academically. The sexual assault suffered by Lara Logan, a CBS journalist, in Tahrir Square in Egypt in 2011, contributed to the opening of the debate on the safety of women in conflict zones (Wolfe, 2011; Steiner, 2017b), revealing a reality until then documented almost exclusively in autobiographical works, which could hardly see the light of day in a context marked by “institutionally sexist editorial structures” (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019). This is one of the issues included in the agenda for the safety of journalists designed by Unesco (2015) and, among the measures promoted, this United Nations institution and Reporters Without Borders published a guide in 2017 for safety in which special mention is made of the safety of women journalists (Unesco & Reporteros sin Fronteras, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

From the appearance of journalists in a conflict zone, in Crimea, Russell predicted a complicated fate for his profession, describing himself as the “miserable father of a luckless tribe” (Knightley, 2004). Indeed, his work inspired the creation of military censorship and he faced relatively predictable dangers in a war. However, he could hardly have imagined some of the transformations that would befall his successors. In the first place, the neglect of newspaper companies. In Spain, precariousness has haunted journalism for decades, and conflict journalism is no exception. However, in recent years, aggravated by the economic crisis, or by the transformation of newsrooms under the discourse of convergence and technological adaptation, the situation has worsened considerably, to the point of absurdity, such as offering 15 euros for news pieces written by freelancers in conflict zones.

Technology has been a transforming element of the profession in a dangerous combination with the aforementioned precariousness. From the interviews it is clear that the increase in technology has brought with it a change in professional routines, such as the demand for immediacy in reporting, which implies a reduction in time for research. In too many occasions, undignified conditions are offered, but a multimedia profile is demanded in exchange. In the case of freelancers, there is also the imperative of the use of networks for the personal brand development and an unlimited demand from the media (interviewees E9 and E11 agree that they want it in all formats, personal communication, April and May 2019).

The incorporation of women into conflict journalism has been an indisputable reality for decades; however, their inclusion into research in a transversal and

central manner is still pending. The visibility and approach to the specific challenges faced by women journalists in conflict zones include labor, professional, and safety issues, for which various international organizations are already proposing initiatives; however, much remains to be done in the media. In this regard, the large presence of women journalists in the Ukrainian war of 2022 and their public denunciations in the networks about the paternalism and discrimination they are experiencing in their professional practice stand out. A line of research that will undoubtedly be of interest to address.

Finally, the safety of journalists is the great unresolved issue. Basic issues such as receiving training, safety equipment, and fair agreements, as well as the importance of dealing with any traumas that may have been created in the course of their work, have disappeared from the responsibilities assumed by the media. Undoubtedly, this is an issue that should be urgently included in the professional and academic agenda.

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