The Impact of War in Your Community

How Wars Across the World Affect Your Audience

By

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War - What Is It Good For?

That was a question two song writers asked in 1969. The song 'War,' recorded by The Temptations, then Edwin Starr, was one of the most powerful and memorable protest songs of that era. Here are some of the lyrics -

War, huh, yeah

What is it good for?

Absolutely nothing, uhh

War, I despise

'Cause it means destruction of innocent lives

War means tears to thousands of mother's eyes

When their sons go off to fight

And lose their lives

War brings out strong feelings among people living in thousands of cities and towns in the United States and across the world. Many of those people will be supportive - many will not. Those who are against a particular war or conflict often become vocal about their opposition. Some sing songs, some chant slogans and carry signs as they

protest publicly. Other people will hold counter-protests that can become challenging for law enforcement officers to control.

As a journalist - how do cover the strong feelings of people as they pertain to wars and armed conflicts across the world?

Covering Wars From Home

I am not addressing this particular newsletter to 'war correspondents.' Thoughts about that are for another day. This is for journalists who may be thousands of miles away from a war or armed conflict, but looking for ways to cover the 'local' impact of wars on people.

How many conflicts are ongoing in our world today? [The Council on Foreign Relations](#) (CFR) reports there are about 30 "ongoing conflicts around the world of concern to the United States."

According to the CFR the ones of most concern to the United States are -

- War in Ukraine - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'critical' and 'worsening'

- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'significant' and 'worsening'

- North Korea Crisis - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'critical' and 'unchanging'

- Confrontation with Iran - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'critical' and 'unchanging'

- Conflict Between India and Pakistan - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'significant' and 'unchanging'

- Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'critical' and 'unchanging'

- Confrontation Over Taiwan - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'critical' and 'worsening'

- Instability in Haiti - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'significant' and 'worsening'

- Criminal Violence in Mexico - impact to the U.S. is listed as 'significant' and 'unchanging'

The CFR listed the rest of the world conflicts as having a 'limited' impact on the United States. As for the impact on people living in other countries, the United Nations reports that a quarter of the world's population live in 'conflict-affected areas.' (NPR) That's about two-billion people within 'direct' impact. The United Nations reports that the world 'is seeing the greatest number of conflicts since the end of WWII.'

Personal Impact

We know something of the 'personal impact' of wars and armed conflicts because of what we see in newscasts, newspapers, online publications, and social media posts. But what about your audience? What do they think about these wars and conflicts? Are any of them refugees from war-torn areas of the world? Do they still have families living in war zones? Are they glued to the news because of their ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds? Are they involved in

contacting lawmakers to let their thoughts and feelings known? Are they involved in physical protests in your community? If so, have any of those protests become physical? Are there threats against members of your community because of their ethnicity, culture, or religion?

Getting to know the people in your community is important. Depending on the number of people living in the area where you report, you may find a large number of people who once lived in some of the war-torn countries or have family or friends still living there. Those are some of the people who can help you report on the impact of 'war' from within your local community.

How do you find these people? Here are some suggestions -

- Churches (e.g. Russian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox)

- Synagogues (Jewish)

- Mosques (Muslim)

- Local universities and colleges (you may find some 'registered student organizations' (RSO) that identify with an ethnic/cultural/religious group)

- Ethnic/cultural/religious elementary and secondary schools

- Ethnic/cultural/religious neighborhoods

- Ethnic/cultural/religious group meetings

- Ethnic/cultural/religious media (e.g. newspapers, radio stations, TV stations devoted to particular groups)

- Ethnic/cultural/religious social media

- Ethnic/cultural/religious stores (e.g. food, clothing, supplies, etc)

Visit some of these places and talk with the people there. Approach them in a way that demonstrates your desire to be accurate and fair, hearing all sides of a story. They may become part of your stories or point you to people who can help. I found that talking with one person often led me to more people who were helpful in covering their concerns. Be sensitive that some people may not want their names or images used in stories for fear of retribution. As a journalist you will need to be able to verify their identity and confirm their involvement in the topic of your story. News managers

will often ask about your sources before agreeing to protect their identity.

However, many people will be open about identifying themselves. That was always my preference as a journalist. I thought it helped the 'credibility' of the reporting to identify people, whenever possible. It's important that your audience trusts your reporting.

Here's an example of one TV station's coverage of the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from a personal perspective. It shows how this person's openness in identifying themselves added to the impact of the story.

Public Protests

Photo by [Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Another way to meet people for local impact stories is a 'public protest.' You may find people lined up on opposite sides of the street. You may find them intermingling, sometimes arguing, sometimes even becoming violent. That's where journalists have to [be careful for their own safety](#). However, many protests are civil and a great place to get to

know people you might later be able to interview and even profile.

Covering the protest is just one aspect of 'war' impact stories in your community. It may be your 'assignment' to cover the protest for live shots. However, in the process of developing video, soundbites, and other information for your live shot you will also meet people you can call later. Be sure to get phone numbers of the people you talk with for follow-up stories. If you are not assigned to live reporting, you may have more time to develop important contacts from all sides of the protest that will help you give the best comprehensive coverage possible.

Neutrality

Journalists should be 'neutral' about these stories. That doesn't mean you don't have personal thoughts or feelings about a story, but it does mean that you will do your job as an 'objective' journalist gathering, confirming, and reporting the truth.

It's not the job of a journalist to determine which side is right or wrong in these stories. Journalists need to do their job to make sure every side is given a fair opportunity to be heard — without any opinions tossed in by reporters or anchors. Your audience deserves to hear information presented accurately and fairly.

Journalists should never join in protesting with any group — whether on or off the job. Journalists should be 'neutral' at all times. If your audience sees you participating for a particular side in a protest, or a photo of you involved in a protest, that's the end of your credibility in covering that story — and possibly most other stories from that point. News managers should 'pull' any journalist from a story where they express their opinions (whether on air or online). Managers should

definitely pull and possibly 'suspend' or 'fire' any journalist who participates in a protest. That should never be allowed.

Here's to safe and effective coverage of the many 'war' stories in your community.

Recent Community Coverage Examples

https://www.wdtn.com/news/reaction-from-local-residents-on-current-war-status/

https://www.wjbf.com/csra-news/local-islamic-community-react-to-the-war-between-israel-and-hamas/

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/one-war-two-perspectives-local-reaction-to-israel-palestine-conflict/ar-AA1joTzl

https://www.foxnews.com/media/brandeis-university-bans-students-justice-palestine-support-hamas

https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/07/us/thousand-oaks-protest-man-dies/index.html

https://www.ketv.com/article/devastating-and-heartbreaking-local-jewish-community-reacts-to-outbreak-of-war-in-israel/45475879

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