

Special Section: Essays on Nationalism, Conflict and Media

Why Global Journalism Matters amid Anti-Globalist Politics

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Abstract: Global journalism covers the complexity of global connections as manifested in countless topics: global water supplies, extractives industries, labor conditions, climate crisis, migration routes and lives, health and disease, humanitarian crisis, conflicts and wars, social inequalities, and the political economy of global commodities (from fast fashion to food). It eschews the national pull that historically tethers journalism to the politics of cultural-geographical spaces. It offers de-centered perspectives that elude customary binary options of west-east, north-south and the rest. By revealing “how the global works,” it refuses to approach the world as fragmented territories. Global journalism is part of the disjointed knowledge institutions that help to “know the global” and interlocking global crises. It exists in a range of news media – mainstream news organizations, citizen journalism, alternative news, specialized news (science, health, environment, humanitarian), and non-profit journalism. It is not tied to breaking news or the tyranny of conventional news values – events, personalities, sensationalism, “the now;” instead, it brings up underlying structural factors, flows, and dynamics. By setting its reporting horizons on global developments, challenges, and risks, it is an unmistakable form of advocacy – it is a call to thinking globally. Although it may not make big headlines on a regular basis, global journalism is particularly significant at a time of anti-globalism and turbo-charged nationalism, the persecution of critical and dissident journalism, science denialism, and the crisis of post-war global institutional architecture. Amid the noise of news and information in the attention economy, it stands for the kind of consciousness-raising news that are necessary in a world with and without borders.

Keywords: global journalism; global risks; global problems

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Journalism and global problems

The world confronts extraordinary global crises— climate, migration, violence, poverty, food insecurity, water scarcity, and diseases. These are overlapping, complex and intractable problems that demand global attention and action. Putting the spotlight on these matters is not simple. How do people know about these issues? How do they come to understand their dimensions, causes, and solutions? What raises their imagination beyond the social confines of geography and social contexts? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand how people know the world and become aware of global developments and the impact on their communities.

Despite longstanding efforts to nurture cosmopolitan sentiments, the global society is insufficiently equipped to raise awareness about global challenges. No doubt, the architecture of international institutions actively engages in the social construction of global problems – that is, the definition of certain issues as matters that demand attention and intervention. The global institutional network includes intergovernmental agencies, global financial institutions, non-government organizations, and private and philanthropic associations engaged with global governance and action. As part of their remit, they play key roles in documenting and elevating global problems to public consciousness. No doubt, this order has been far from perfect. It has exhibited numerous shortcomings, contradictions, and hypocrisies, which partially account for chronic difficulties in addressing entrenched global problems. Yet, it has provided the structure and the opportunities for cultivating a global imagination, defining concrete goals and actions, and deploying significant human and funding resources.

Journalism is integral to the communicative resources of the global society. It has the potential to foster global consciousness and engagement, a longstanding expectation among journalists and the public. This expectation underlies the commitment of journalists and news organizations to bring attention to specific issues and spark global action – consciousness-raising, witnessing, mobilization. Given its everyday reach to billions around the world, journalism is indispensable for fostering a global pathos – a sensibility defined by understanding and empathizing with lives and communities around the world (Lindell & Karlsson, 2020). Amid the cascade of daily news, journalism covers the conditions of people and social forces shaping the world in many forms of reporting, storytelling, documentaries, and podcasts. In its vast diversity, journalism is uniquely positioned to produce global stories that reach a considerable number of people worldwide. It has a unique capacity to get citizens and elites to pay attention, care, and act. It is hard to think about other institutions that have similar ability and potential to bring attention to global problems and dynamics.

Journalistic efforts to cultivate cosmopolitan consciousness are especially important at a time when world politics is a petri dish of surging nationalism, xenophobia, war, and the slicing up of the world in distinct areas of geopolitical influence. These forces

are contrary to the kind of global action and communication that is needed to address major crises. Not only do they deny the existence of global problems or offer solutions, such as the case of the climate crisis or global migration, that run against essential human rights and duties. They also vilify globalism and the global institutional architecture built during the post-war international order that includes international agencies and donors, legal frameworks, and supporting philosophical and moral principles.

Key aspects of global journalism

One of the main contributions of journalism to fostering a global consciousness is reporting the interconnected dynamics of the global society. What we could call global journalism surveys the world in search of stories that exhibit how globalization works and stretch our perception of the world. It refers to news reports that document problems and consequences; investigate causes and responsibilities; bring up myriad perspectives from governments, technical experts, relevant business, social, and civic organizations, and ordinary citizens; and present possible actions, policy options, and solutions. Global journalism focuses on the transnational dimensions of crises and problems. These stories include reporting on the linkages among the climate crisis, food insecurity, and migration; the devastating consequences of mineral commodity booms and extractive practices on local employment, ecological practices, and community health; and the impact of global demand for certain products (from beef to microchips) on production, labor, life, and safety, particularly in the Global South.

Global journalism is different from conventional international news. It eschews typical ways of understanding world news in terms of discrete countries or regions – West/East, South/North, or developed/underdeveloped. It invites us to de-center our vision of the world and contemporary problems by foregrounding connected developments that transcend political geographies and geopolitics. It takes a transnational view of the world rather than national perspectives that generally shape international news. Instead of offering snapshots of disparate events around the world, global journalism aims to connect developments and stories.

Global journalism crosses the traditional division of labor in newsrooms. It is not a conventional beat. It does not fit squarely the standard purview of news desks. The climate crisis can be the focus of stories on health, food, or violence. Global migration can be covered in news stories about music, race, and sports. Global labor can be the subject of business and metro/city sections that report on the impact of labor practices and regulations on global chains of production and distribution. Science stories can underscore the causes and the consequences of conflict and human development.

Just as it transcends conventional news beats, global journalism also crosses newsrooms and geographical borders. In recent decades, news organizations and reporters have jointly covered myriad issues – business practices, financial dealings, migration networks, the transnational economies of war. These collaborations demand revamping traditional professional cultures and nurturing collaborative spirits and practices. Basic agreements around ethics and building trust are fundamental conditions for cross-border collaboration, especially given the sensitivity of specific stories, such as investigations on powerful political, economic, and financial actors (Cheas, 2026). Because global stories and international collaborations focus on complex issues, they bring together journalists with a range of complementary expertise in technical areas (e.g. science, health, and finance) and skills (e.g. data collection, analysis, and visualization, and multiple media formats). Consider the case of “Big Tech’s invisible hand,” a cross-border investigation on the unaccountable power of technology giants in the Global South, led by Brazil’s Agência Pública and Colombia’s Centro Latinoamericano de Investigación Periodística (CLIP) in partnership with a dozen of news organizations from around the world. Given the complexity of the subject, the project required multiple areas of expertise and skills to document lobbying practices and undue influence on media policies (Gatehouse, 2025).

Examples of “global journalism” are found in a range of news organizations – global and regional, mainstream and alternative, public and private, for-profit and non-profit, and funded by various sources (such as public monies, advertising, subscriptions, philanthropy, grants).

Some news organizations regularly publish examples of global journalism, such as the Global Investigative Journalism Network, Forbidden Stories, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), Bellingcat, and the International Consortium for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ), and dozens of region/country-based investigate organizations who often collaborate with them. They have covered a wide range of cross-border issues – corrupt financial schemes, illegal weapons sales, drug-trafficking. Perhaps the best-known examples are the Panama Papers and similar investigations on global financial wrongdoing and corruption involving banks, legal firms, public officials, and wealthy elites.

Global journalism is also produced by leading global news organizations, such as BBC World, Al Jazeera, Reuters, CNN, The New York Times, Associated Press, The Washington Post, The Guardian, and other legacy news companies with a strong position in national markets. While their mission and scope are much broader, they have published global stories.

Smaller news organizations with a national/regional focus have also published examples of global journalism. In Latin America, Peru’s Ojo Público and Brazil’s Sumaúma have revealed the linkages between illegal mining in their countries and the financing of drug trafficking and guerrilla groups in the region. Mongabay Latam

investigated the negative impact of illegal mining on youth employment, health indicators, and the destruction of the Amazon in several countries. Amazonunderworld.org has done superb reporting by approaching the Amazon as the connecting waterway for economics, politics, illegal trade, violence, mining and other issues in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela. Mexico-based Dromomanos has produced stories guided by its slogan: “borders exist to be crossed.” Stories expose cross-national connections among several issues – drug-trafficking, violence, mining, business, and the environment. They publish stories on their own sites as well in other, legacy news organizations. Connectas has also covered an array of stories about issues that overlap national boundaries in the region. The Border Chronicle is a collaboration among journalists on both sides of the US-Mexico border interested in changing conventional ways of thinking about borders by covering issues such as corporate power, migration, climate change, and border patrol.

Covering the multiple facets of globalization

Global journalism covers the world by focusing on three facets: global forces, commodities, and communities.

Global forces are structural, long-term processes shaping and changing the world. BBC’s John Vidal revealed how climate change brings about new infectious diseases around the world, with ripple effects on the economy, society, and politics (Vidal, 2023). New York Times’ Somini Sengupta reported on the massive impact of drought around the world, including agricultural productivity, access to food, and livelihoods (Sengupta, 2025). Washington Post reporters Veronica Penney and John Muyskens documented how population growth and rising temperatures endanger access to safe water (Penney & Muyskens, 2023). News organizations have covered how the impact of economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic pushed people into making dangerous journeys across continents in search of a better future. Stories have covered the global dimensions of the AI revolution, the proliferation of data centers worldwide and their impact on the environment, water, jobs, and health (Mozur, Satariano, & Rodriguez Mega, 2025).

Other topics include the impact of heat waves and droughts on farms worldwide that negatively affect crops and food supply; the ripple effects of global wealth inequality on communities worldwide; the displacement of staggering numbers of people due to climate crisis, conflict, and war; the dynamics and the impact of global slavery; and the intensification of zoonotic diseases jumping to humans due to human expansion and exploitation of virgin lands. NGO-news organizations hybrids have published a raft of stories with a similar focus. PeaceNews revealed how technology companies fuel mining-based and funded conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Omar & Simms, 2023). Forbidden Stories has published stories on cross-border problems, such as organized crime in South America, disinformation

campaigns in Africa, and environmental crimes in Southeast Asia. The ICIJ has covered how the global crypto industry has funneled money linked to criminal networks.

Global journalism also focuses on global commodities, such as energy (oil, coal, gas), metals (gold, copper, silver, lithium, cobalt), and agricultural products (coffee, sugar, tea, cotton, wheat, meat). “Commodity stories” examined different aspects of such as the conditions of production, the impact of fluctuations in global demand, supply chains, and labor conditions. Global Press Journal reporter Linda Mujuru covered how rising global demand for gold drives miners in Zimbabwe to dangerous practices as well as the negative impact of mining on community health (Mujuru, 2022). New York Times reporters Megha Rajagopalan and Qadri Inzamam covered the multiple, connected dimensions of the sugar economy and social practices in India related to global demand for sugary drinks and the politics of giant food corporations (Rajagopalan & Inzamam, 2024). The Guardian’s Aimee Gabay reported on the negative consequences of illegal mining in the Peruvian Amazon, driven by the global rises of the prices of gold and other minerals (Gabay, 2023). Wyatt Williams reported for the New York Times on the impact of rising demand for coffee, primarily in western countries, on agricultural practices and illegal deforestation in coffee-producing countries (Williams, 2021).

A partnership among The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the Guardian, Repórter Brasil and Forbidden Stories uncovered massive deforestation by the meat industry to expand cattle-raising operations and slaughterhouses, as well the appropriation of land from indigenous populations (Wasley et al., 2019). Junaid Manzoor Dar (2023) reported for India’s The Wire on harsh conditions spurred by water scarcity in the Kashmir valley, and how the situation disproportionately affects women and girls tasked with fetching waters, often from distant and polluted sources. The report combines personal testimonies from local citizens, with information from government sources and technical agencies.

A sub-genre of global commodities are news stories on global objects which condense the dynamics of global production, distribution, trade, and marketing. Stories have focused on smartphones, cars, rechargeable batteries, cosmetics, and clothing. In a New York Times story, Ginger Allington reports on the impact of demand for cashmere sweaters on the environment in Mongolia, a major global source of the fabric (Allington, 2023). In a story for Greenpeace, Helle Abelvik-Lawson reported on the negative impact of “fast fashion” on the environment as well as their effects on work conditions and violence (Abelvik-Lawson, 2020). Among other news organizations, CNBC covered the uses of conflict minerals into phones and other common technologies (Brigham, 2023). BBC World and CNBC have investigated child labor, toxic products, and deforestation in the production of cosmetics.

A third focus of global journalism are transnational communities such as migrant workers, immigrants, cause activists, faith-based organizations, advocates, and

journalists. Exile journalism is one example of this approach. It focuses on the life experiences of diasporic communities around the world (Dodds et al., 2024). It documents key global dynamics – the movements of people across borders caused by global crises (economic collapse, war and conflict, climate crisis, and social and political violence), and the hybrid condition of publics/audiences. Furthermore, the personal experience of migrant journalists is a critical aspect of exile journalism. In many cases, journalists went into exile due to anti-press violence. Exile journalism reflects the in-between position of journalists, the redefinition of professional values grounded in different journalistic cultures, and efforts to cover the linkages between “back home” and host countries and communities.

What these stories share is the focus on global dynamics. Aside from differences in terms of themes, framing, and tone, they identify and connect developments, and demonstrate their relevance and ramifications around the world. They report how globalization works and its impact on politics, economics, business, labor, culture, consumption, and other aspects.

Why global journalism matters

Global journalism is important not only as a tool of “global reflexivity” (Beck, 2006). It is also significant in the current global political and information context. Amid dehumanization and violations of human rights, global journalism makes common principles and values visible. It reminds how developments in seemingly distant corners of the world affect populations. It challenges nationalism’s penchant for constructing problems and solutions as “national.” It fosters a global consciousness against xenophobic condemnation and the rejection of cosmopolitanism. It documents the complexity of migration, climate crisis, and resource exploitation that are deliberately ignored or misrepresented by country-first movements and populist demagogues.

Global journalism also makes visible dynamics and consequences that powerful actors try to ignore and silence through disinformation campaigns. Their playbook includes: burying, twisting and manufacturing evidence; obfuscating the issues; deflecting attention; refusing to acknowledge responsibility; challenging scientific evidence with “alternative” data and false arguments; and name-calling and persecuting journalists and news organizations. Against disinformation actors hellbent on lying and confusing the public, global journalism aims to set the record straight. With facts and personal stories, it documents facts and truth of globalization in contrast to the denialism about the reality of the climate crisis, the rights and the contributions of migrant populations, the impact of toxic industrial practices, and other issues.

Yet, despite numerous examples across news organizations, global journalism remains a rarity in the vast world of news. Its position is comparable to that of other

news genres, such as investigative reporting (Waisbord, 2000) and peace journalism (Galtung, 2003), which also have limited presence. Whereas investigative reporting reveals wrongdoing and abuses committed by powerful institutions and individuals, peace journalism is focused on understanding the causes and identifying solutions to war and conflict. They face similar challenges: news industries are structurally predisposed to pay regular attention to other news, make money with minimal investments in original reporting, are entangled with powerful actors, and pursue corporate, political, and editorial goals without much concern for global problems. In fact, considering that news is a quickly disposable, short-lived commodity, it is remarkable that news organizations invest in global stories at all. They may not be the most effective way to reel in audiences and maximize SEO numbers given that, in terms of media economics and professional interests, local and national stories are journalism's gravitational center.

Another challenge is that global stories rarely get significant attention or spur public debate, action, and policies. Stories are likely to fade quickly into yesterday's news amid the staggering amount of digital content ricocheting in the Internet. Except for those news stories that rocketed to global attention, like the Epstein files, the Panama Papers and similar revelations about tax havens that benefit the ultra-rich, most news stories have limited impact in terms of news cycles, global attention, and prompting government inquiries and policies. Occasionally, it is reported that specific stories contributed to official actions to address problems, like the 2025 investigation by The New York Times and The Examination about the toxic consequences of recycling batteries in Nigeria by western automakers (Bennhold, 2025). Journalism has to figure out how to make global stories stand out in today's fragmented attention economy.

These challenges do not lessen the fact that global stories are important contributions to public knowledge as they document global problems. Global journalism is a news tonic amid rising anti-globalism and the transition to a new world order. It helps citizens understand our global condition, and broaden the way we experience the world. It lays out a wide-ranging thematic agenda for global attention and action. It shakes off parochial thinking that refuses to acknowledge global problems and multiple connections that shape our globalized world – the kind of thinking that fuels contemporary populism and authoritarianism. It reveals the dangers of (news) nationalism that negates the multifaceted reality of globalization and the urgency of global risks and problems.

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