Global Journalism: Understanding World Media Systems

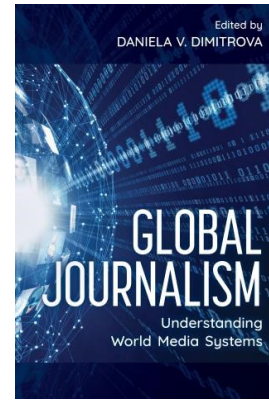Pauline Gidget Estella & Martin Löffelholz

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The book *Global Journalism: Understanding World Media Systems* takes off from an interesting premise. It aims to explore issues and key concepts in both global journalism and world media systems with students as the primary audience. Describing the state of the art, theoretical frameworks, and the notion of "ethnocentrism" in research for such an intended audience could be quite challenging. Nevertheless, the book does deliver on its promise, with its clear-cut structure that manages to cover core ideas to contextual realities to contemporary issues, as well as its tools for understanding, such as summaries, detailed case studies, and discussion questions per chapter. The structure and content of the volume are guided by the aim to provide a truly "global outlook" and to keep pace with the "explosive growth of communication technologies", or in other words, to take account of the "technological change and its impact on all aspects of global journalism" (p. xi). The book cautions against "cultural relativism" (p. 1) or using one's own perspective as yardstick for examining the media in another setting, and this push against essentializing global media is the overarching theme of the volume. The book has three sections (four, if the introductory chapter is included): the first deals with "key concepts" in global journalism, the second with "current trends in journalism and media" across the seven world regions, and the last with "current issues" that affect global media audiences. The introductory chapter proposes a framework for the study of world media systems, which describes the media system as embedded in different macro-level contexts, following a summary of the "dominant theoretical models" (p. xii) that aid the understanding of global media.

The framework in the introductory chapter should explain the logic behind the selection of some topics in the key concepts section, as well as the structure of the chapters in the world regions section. Its core assumption is that a "nation's media development" is circumscribed by 1) political factors ("political system, media policy, and government factors"), 2) economic factors, 3) cultural factors ("such as language and cultural norms", 4) technological factors, and 5) journalistic factors ("journalistic autonomy", professional identity, and "level of professionalization") (p. xii). While the framework presents broad dimensions that could be used for theory-building or operationalization in empirical research, there is a need to first distinguish between "global journalism" and "world media systems". These are two complex concepts and fields of research, and each has its own set of dimensions and critical issues. Not least, globally distributed entertainment or advertising indicate that the term "world media systems" should by no means be used synonymously with the term "global journalism". If the introductory chapter aims to explain – and justify – the foci of the book and its intended contributions, then it would be reasonable to expect a discussion of the definitional delineations of global, international, transnational, or cross-border journalism, or perhaps a framework explicating relationships between media systems and global journalism, or even a talk on a theoret-

ical "global media system" in relation to a normative view of global journalism. However, the foundations chapter omitted this discussion, which we think should be included at the beginning, especially since the book is primarily aimed at students who are often confused by the variety of similar terms.

In the next section, the chapters on "international news flows", journalistic cultures, role of technology, and other key concepts correspond to some of the dimensions in the framework in understanding media systems. Wu's chapter, for instance, on the role of technology in global journalism corresponds to the technological factors dimension, while Raemy and Hellmueller's – and to some extent Tsetsura and Kruckeberg's on journalistic ethics – chapter corresponds with the journalistic factors dimension. However, if one assumes a one-to-one relationship between the framework elements and the key concepts section, then some dimensions were also left out, particularly the economic factors dimension. Despite a few individual references, there is no separate chapter addressing how global capitalist structures and related economic determinants affect journalism and media systems, as one might expect from the main assumption of the framework.

Nevertheless, several chapters in the key concepts section are very impressive contributions to the body of knowledge, as they offer interesting frameworks for understanding journalism as a profession and other related phenomena, anchored on robust empirical evidence. Segev, for example, described international news flows and how these reflect power asymmetry between the Global North and South, arriving at the Power Proximity Model of Global News Flows. The chapter also includes figures showing the hierarchies and reciprocities of global news flows based on an analysis of more than 192,000 news items, which suggest that even in the digital age, the "historical imbalances" in the information flows between the rich countries and the "periphery" still exist. Raemy and Hellmueller also discussed existing frameworks on journalists' role negotiation and constitution of professional identity, provided an appraisal of the state of research on journalistic cultures, and from these derived suggestions for future research.

The strength of other chapters in this section lies on how these explored critical perspectives, emerging issues, and arenas of debate, such as Tsetsura and Kruckeberg's work on journalistic ethics and the contested notions of professionalization and Vlad's discussion on debates and future challenges in journalism education. Whyatt's chapter is compelling especially because of its atypical and more aggressive language (atypical perhaps when compared with the general tone of academic writing), and perhaps rightfully so as it tackles issues of media freedom, harassment of journalists, and human rights. The chapter, as well as others in this volume, benefited from sidebars detailing concrete examples or case studies, such as the "Killing of Kuciak" (the assassination of an investigative journalist in Slovakia) in Whyatt's chapter and the "Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal" in Wu's chapter on technology and global journalism. Such illustrative examples and sidebars that also provide context (e.g. the sidebar on the "Arab Spring" in Kozman's chapter on media in

the Middle East and North Africa) can be helpful in engaging or clinching the attention of audiences that have little to no exposure to media issues and media research in other countries, which might be the case for some undergraduate students.

The next section, which aims to "[take] the reader on a journey around the globe" (p. xiii), focuses on the media across seven global regions, with each chapter corresponding to each region instead of selected countries typical of earlier handbooks. The chapters generally follow a structure according to the main dimensions of the framework described in the introductory chapter, such that there are sections on the "political system", history, economy, "journalistic factors", technology, and other issues in the media system. This kind of organization has both a strength and weakness, which we think the editor and the authors are perfectly aware of. While it is able to take stock of common trends across a region, it also compromises on the particularities that may be important. The challenge therefore is to ensure that the trends are indeed common across a region, or if the region can be more or less 'generalized' in terms of these trends, and that the important particularities are not neglected. This is a daunting task, but in general, the chapters were able to meet these criteria, with insightful discussions on macro-contexts and other relevant issues that influence the media system, or its distinct features, e.g. the "development journalism" (p. 154) paradigm and "journalists as agents of democratization" (p. 157) in Asia-Pacific.

Although the editor states in the preface that the final section focuses on "issues that have deeply affected audiences on a global scale" (p. xv), the choice of topics is ambiguous from our perspective. Rantanen and Kelly describe the digital transformation of three news agencies, processes that began decades ago. Contrary to what the title of Cozma's chapter suggests, this is less about international crisis and war journalism and more about describing the (alleged) decline of foreign reporting. Finally, Lee's chapter takes a brief look at the role of public diplomacy. In terms of teaching, however, these three topics could at least be used to discuss the challenges and obstacles of international communication in a case-by-case manner, complementing the so-called key concepts.

Taken together, the book provides an overview of selected discourses in international journalism research and offers insights into central characteristics of media systems worldwide, and thus complements the corpus of introductory literature quite usefully.