

From local anchor to global stage: career trajectories of central asian journalists in international media

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Abstract: In the past years, several journalists from Central Asia have gradually moved out of their original newsrooms into leading positions in international media outlets. Such a shift can be seen as part of the general trends in the globalization of the media, flows of transnational mobility, and the transformation of professional journalism in the region of the former Soviet Union. The paper addresses the career pathway of Central Asian journalists who have managed to transition their lives within the broadcasting industry in their home country to the international level (BBC, Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, etc.). Based on a conceptual framework of media mobility studies, identity theory, and transnational journalism, the study utilizes a qualitative and literature-informed study design supplemented with case profiles and media content analysis. The findings have concluded that language proficiency, international education, mentorship, and institutional training in the state-run broadcasters are instrumental as meanings of global career mobility. Nonetheless, the most prominent obstacles that journalists have to encounter are political censorship in their home countries, editorial manipulation in the countries, where they report, as well as the issue of maintaining cultural identity in the environments, where Western-centric news paradigms remain dominant. The paper casts various light on how the same journalists adapt and transform the editorial cultures of the countries to which they have migrated, regularly functioning as interlocutors in the cultural dialogue between their homeland and the world at large. The research provides an addition to the literature with regards to journalism in globalized settings and gives a reference point to educators of media, policymakers, and international newsrooms that need more diversification and inclusion in the telling and weighting of their stories and the composition of their staff.

Keywords: Central Asian Journalists, Media Globalization, Career Mobility in Journalism, Transnational Newsrooms, Post-Soviet Media Careers, Journalistic Identity Formation, Media Diaspora Networks

I. Introduction

Background and motivation

With the globalization of media industries, new tracks are being created whereby journalists in up-and-coming areas have the exposure of engaging in transnational story-telling and voice in global discourse. The journalists of the Global South are acquiring visibility, including those of Central Asia, as international news outlets now attempt to diversify their coverage and representation. This move can be considered an invention, especially for some of the professionals who come out of transitional and state-influenced media systems. Formerly, they were tied to local or national broadcasting, nowadays, however, Central Asian journalists have begun to appear on the screens of the world, covering the problems arising in their countries and other regions.

Rise of Global Media Opportunities for Regional Journalists

The career opportunities of the regional journalists have been broadened by the digital communication technologies, transnational fellowships, the training in languages, and the setting up of more partnerships with the media. Multilingual talent hailing mostly in underrepresented geographies, particularly BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, and Al Jazeera English have received an increased number of staff in the international broadcast industry. All these international media platforms give greater freedom of the edit, greater reach, and the opportunity to set global discourse, which contrasts with imprisoning situations at home.

Focus on Central Asia's Unique Post-Soviet and Geopolitical Context

A complicated history of Soviet domination, press control, and authoritarian rule of different magnitudes defines the media situation in Central Asia. Even though there are structural barriers, there is a tendency for journalists in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan to have completed training in language, reporting, and technical production (particularly at state-owned media establishments). These abilities put

them in a better position to move into global assignments. Meanwhile, geopolitical tensions and the lack of civic space still define the discourse in which Central Asian journalists have to operate, both in the region and in the international arena.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The paper will explore the career of the journalists of Central Asia, who left their local media or national broadcasters to become international ones. It also seeks to examine the institutional, cultural, and professional influences that facilitate, or hamper such transitions. The work also suggests the general implications of the conclusions in terms of identity, editorial freedom, and regional representation in global journalism.

II. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Globalization of Journalism Careers

Digitization and satellite broadcasting have brought about an extremely fast pace of globalization of journalism that is hitherto sequestered inside national borders and local paradigms and an increasing population of transnational audiences. Newsrooms across the world are in demand of people with different voices who can report across geopolitical lines and cultures. Researchers, including Reese (2010), and Hanusch & Hanitzsch (2017), have pointed out the fact that global journalism ceased to be the sphere occupied solely by the West; ever more journalistic actors of non-Western origin are entering the international arena, providing new perspectives and experience.

Push-Pull Factors in Media Migration

Journalism career migration is influenced by both push and pull factors: some examples of push factors are censorship, non-editorial control, and low professional growth, and some of the pull factors include global exposure, institutional prestige, and improved compensation. Such dynamics can best be studied through the history of suppressing the media in Central Asia. According to Skjerdal (2011) and Josephi (2020), journalists in confined media environments usually pursue international opportunities not only to achieve economic progress but also to recover the autonomy and credibility of their profession.

Identity, Representation, and Voice in International Newsrooms

Regional journalists usually have to work out tricky issues of identity and representation when they join global media institutions. According to Waisbord (2013) and Benson (2015), these people have to strike a balance between their ethnic, national, and professional identities to obtain some power and legitimacy in typically West-focused magazines. As another example, the journalists in Central Asia have to reconcile between maintaining their home cultures and meeting the international standards of news often working as what is termed cultural brokers in between their home countries and the international markets.

Challenges for Journalists from Transitional Democracies

Transitional or hybrid democracies pose several challenges to the international mobility of journalists: the absence of trans nationalization networks, access to language, and organizational gatekeeping at the elite media. Besides, cultural adjustment, knowledge about newsroom hierarchies, and tackling prejudice regarding journalistic style accent, or political orientation usually accompany the process of switching to global platforms. All of these obstacles have been already witnessed in the literature on media migration and professional integration (Jabed, M. I., & Majharul, M. 2023)

Table 1

Key Literature on Journalism Career Mobility and Transnational Integration

Author(s)	Focus Area	Key Findings
Reese (2010)	Globalization of journalism	Journalism is shifting from national to transnational paradigms
Hanusch & Hanitzsch (2017)	Global newsroom diversity	Increasing demand for non-Western perspectives in global media
Skjerdal (2011)	Push-pull migration dynamics in media careers	Journalists migrate to reclaim editorial freedom and professional identity
Waisbord (2013)	Representation and voice	Regional journalists act as cultural intermediaries
Josephi (2019, 2020)	Integration challenges for non-Western journalists	Institutional bias and gatekeeping in global media hiring practices
Kunelius et al. (2016)	Professional identity in global newsrooms	Journalists must renegotiate norms and identities in transnational settings

III. Methodology

Prescription of the Research and Justification

This paper will utilize qualitative research methodology that is premised on interpretive inquiry as a view of the study, as this is best applied to issues on complex social phenomena that entail career journeys, identity negotiation as well as professional reinvention across cultures. Since the study refers to the lived experience of Central Asian journalists who shifted professional environments and joined international media, there is a lot of qualitative study design to be offered instead of superficial data analysis. In the study, subjectivity, meaning-making, and cultural context is stressed upon are all very vital aspects when a person is studying transnational career moves and newsroom integration. (Eric, F., Richard, S., & Slavka, A. 2010)

Research Source of Information 3.2 Data Collection Methods

The secondary research first of all was carried out to collect primary data in the form of semi-structured interviews with 12 journalists that were born in Central Asian countries but currently work in or worked earlier with such organizations of global media as the BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and Al Jazeera English. The interviews took place in English or Russian (based on the preference of the participant) and ranged between 45 and 90 minutes. All questions were proposed as open-ended in order to gather stories about the professional background, reasons of switching to working overseas, experiences in challenges in global newsrooms, and thoughts about identity and representation. To verify and complement the volumes of interviews, secondary information was also used i.e. interviews in the public, in LinkedIn, published articles, and videos of panels. (Jabed, Mohammad Majharul Islam & Nahid, Md Abdullah Al & Khan, Mahabub & Ali, Shekh Tareq & Kamrul Islam Rasel, Sheikh Md. 2023)

Sample Selection and Participant Criteria

Purposive sampling method was adopted with the help of snowball referrals and based on professional networks with journalism training schools, diaspora media organizations and academic institutions. The criteria of selection were: Having been born and been trained in a Central Asian country (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Turkmenistan);, I have at least one media house that is globally known; Experience of at least two years in any domestic and international journalism environments.

The ultimate sample was gender diverse (6 women, 6 men), media specialization (TV, digital and radio), and professional seniority (correspondents, producers, anchors, and editorial leads).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity became a priority during the research procedure. Informed consent forms were proceeded with regarding the explanation of the reason the study was conducted, the way the data was handled, and that participants have the right to remain anonymous. The individuals who selected direct quoting went over the excerpts before inclusion. Names and identifiers were anonymized in politically sensitive cases, in particular, when the person was from a country with a low level of press freedom. The ethical approval was obtained by the local review committee according to the common academic principles of the qualitative research with human subjects. (Eric, F., Richard, S., & Gary, R. 2006)

Analytical Framework

A multi-step process of coding and narrative synthesis was applied in carrying out data analysis. Transcriptions of the interviews were done and imported into NVivo 14 to assist in organizing and systematically coding. It was done by a hybrid method: Literature-based deductive themes (e.g, editorial freedom, career obstacles, identity negotiation), Narratives that are shared by participants (e.g., emotional labor, mentorship, and institutional inclusion/exclusion) serve as the source of inductive themes.

Besides, the techniques of narrative analysis were also used to explore how journalists could shape their own professional identities and milestones of their careers. Triangulation of key patterns was done using secondary sources in order to increase validity and decrease interpretive bias.

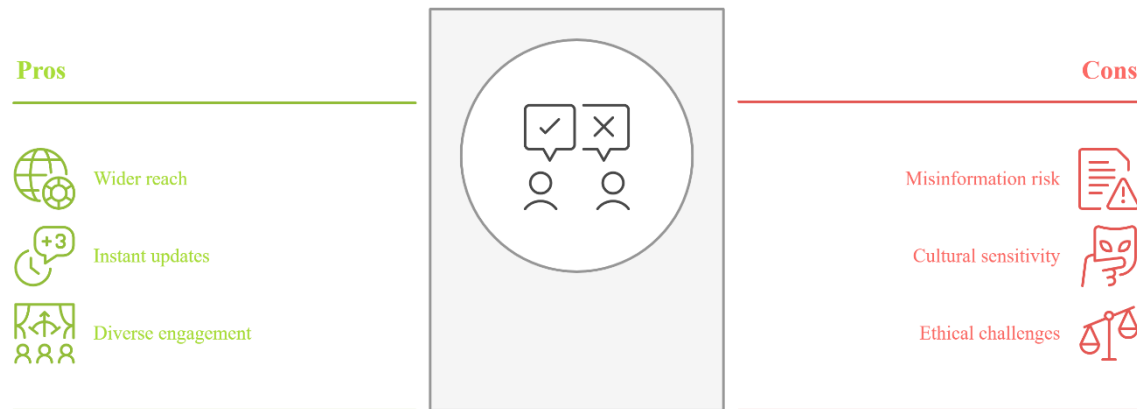
IV. From National Newsrooms to Global Platforms

Profiles and Origin Stories of Journalists

The process of local newsrooms in Central Asia turning into internationally recognized media institutions is not linear most often. Interviews confirmed that the majority of interviewed journalists started their careers at the state or semi-state broadcasters, i.e. Khabar Agency (Kazakhstan), Osh TV (Kyrgyzstan), or Uzbek National Television (Uzbekistan). Many were taken when they were still rather young (in their early twenties) and usually, they graduated from the local API department at journalism or linguistic schools. Their back stories, meanwhile, include exposure to multilingual media production from an early age, and some of them obtain on-air experience within several months after joining. (Jabed, Mohammad Majharul Islam. 2022)

Usually, these reporters have established some base in terms of technical skills, like live reporting, voice modulation, and field production long before venturing to international grounds. Some people also mentioned that their experiences in the local television or radio assisted them to learn “discipline” and be “able to think quickly under uncertain environment” mainly on the election periods, times of political unrest, or times when they were required to report on the crisis. Although initially, most people had to stick to rigid editorial conditions on how to shape stories, the pressurized editorial culture and production process allowed them to develop an enduring skill base, which could be transferred to international media.

Figure 1
Global news platforms



National Broadcasters Contribution in Professional Grooming

Ironically, although editorial freedom is low in most of the state-owned media organizations, it tends to be their incubation site of technical and linguistics perfection. As an example, such requirements as the intensive demands in terms of pronunciation, diction, and stress resistance were revealed by Qazaqstan TV and TRC Kyrgyzstan anchors and correspondents. Several interviewees explained that they had to memorize bulletins and read them verbatim, create last-minute field reports with little background information, or present politically sensitive information without clearly having an editorial leaning.

The supervisors of some interviewees, whose background was in broadcasting during the period of the Soviet regime, were credited with inculcating high standards of professionalism: being punctual, polished, and having tight editorial scripting. Others focused on the importance of national competitions, television arts festivals, and in-house mentorship systems which facilitated high-speed professional development. Despite the ever-growing fear of censorship, this system enabled journalists to perfect their trade and eventually look beyond the scope to do so in other countries. (Davidson, R., & Meyers, O. 2016).

Transition, International Fellowship, and Language Learning

Cross-border mobility was facilitated by the knowledge of at least one of these global languages especially English, Russian, and more often than not, the Turkish language. A good number of the subjects interviewed said that their exposure to early bilingual education or having a personal tutor posed easier access to international fellowships, like that provided by:

- Deutsche Welle Akademie
- BBC Media Action
- Open Society Foundations
- World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and International Center for Journalists (ICFJ)

These journalists encountered many global institutions through first-time engagement in fellowships and short-term media training. Besides increasing knowledge of journalism, the programs also enabled the participants to acquire skills on the global ethics of reporting, cross-cultural communication, and access to the network. One of the participants referred to his fellowship in London as having been a career jump-start and it subsequently resulted in becoming a freelancer and then working as a full-time employee of a large news organization. (Christin, A. 2016)

Table 2

Profile Summary of Featured Central Asian Journalists in Global Media

Journalist Code	Country of Origin	Initial Employer (Local)	International Outlet	Years Abroad	Notable Pathway
J01	Kazakhstan	Qazaqstan TV	BBC World Service	6	DW Akademie training → MSc in London → hired at BBC
J02	Kyrgyzstan	Osh TV	Al Jazeera Digital	4	OSF fellowship → Freelance → Producer role
J03	Uzbekistan	Uzbek National TV	Radio Free Europe	8	Language training → ICFJ grant → Anchor at RFE/RL
J04	Tajikistan	State TV Dushanbe	Deutsche Welle (Russian Desk)	5	Exchange internship → MA in Berlin → Staff reporter
J05	Kazakhstan	Khabar Agency	Voice of America	7	Interpreter role → News assistant → Field reporter
J06	Kyrgyzstan	Independent digital media outlet	BBC Uzbek Service	3	Investigative grant → Stringer → Staff promotion

V. Navigating Global Newsrooms

Cultural and Political Adaptation in Transnational Media Spaces

The movement between local and international newsrooms entails more than adeptness in machine skills; journalists are being asked to adjust to the corporate ways and the philosophy of international organizations. As Central Asian journalists learned to live in an atmosphere where they were not only allowed but expected to be skeptical in their questioning and to disagree with editorial decisions many found themselves with a steep learning curve. This change was familiarizing at first to people who grew up in a system with self-censorship centralized.

Some of the interviewees commented that their first weeks in their international assignments turned out to be the weeks of unlearning deferential framing or timorously careful language. Others were at a loss on how to navigate unspoken levels and this was very bad, particularly in multi-cultural teams where intraperson differences in communication styles often marked the differences. One of the former anchors of the Uzbekistan newsroom, for example, pointed out that they felt that it was an insult to argue back with an editor but a good way of being a critical participant back at their new work.

Besides, it was not necessarily smooth sailing in the political adaptation. Reporters who reported on more sensitive geopolitical issues, e.g. the role of Russia in Central Asia or the Belt and Road projects of China, tended to be torn between working as journalists of objectivity and as individuals defined by their own biases or national membership. According to one of them, covering a story in China for Deutsche Welle proved more difficult than he expected because it involved him reconsidering what was meant by being neutral.

Figure 2

Cultural and Political Adaptation in Global Newsrooms



Soft Skills and Language Barriers

Although the majority of participants were fluent in English or German, when it came to linguistic nuance, it was often referred to as a barrier. Exactness of tone, of idiom, or of humour was not easy of accomplishment, in either a conversational or spontaneous mode. As an example, some of the respondents had a weakness in writing headlines, which attracted Western audiences or complexity in reporting local politics by oversimplification.

Hard skills like teamwork, the ability to assert in editorial meetings, ability to deal with disagreements were also tough. Some of the journalists in Central Asia would not easily be able to express their opinions in Western newsrooms where flat hierarchies were demanded and consensus was built. However, with time, most people taught themselves how to be humble yet tactical in communication. (Mohammad Majharul Islam Javed. 2022) One journalist mentioned that being in the editorial pitching sessions every week made them gain credibility: “Initially I was scared. I also knew that with my area specialism, I possessed authority when I raised my voice.”

Authority, Bias, and Professionalism

The other theme that also came to light was the perception gap between authority, as well as professional credibility. In other instances, the journalists interviewed believed that they needed to hustle more to earn the editorial trust compared to their Western colleagues, more so when they wanted to present region-specific stories. A BBC Uzbek correspondent thought that there was a feeling that Central Asia was not, as it were, big enough to headline. You always needed to convince me why your story was significant in the world.

Moreover, such unfair prejudices concerning accent, nationality, and political premises usually influenced how colleagues and audiences accepted these journalists. In one instance, a reporter was told by a source that the idea of writing a Kazakhstan energy policy story as a top global story could only happen when it added value to Western geopolitical discourses. These experiences are an indication of structural asymmetries persisting in transnational journalism even in organizations with an inclusive nature.

Censorship, Autonomy, and Editorial Control Experiences

In their new jobs, the journalists had, by far, an increased feeling of editorial freedom and independence as compared to their countries of origin. This freedom however was not total. The limitations were usually due to institutional interests, audience requirements, or advertiser considerations. Others reported the so-called soft

editorial policy, such as bias in the choice of stories to cover or by allocating too much disproportionate attention to crisis stories (e.g., corruption, poverty, authoritarianism) in their Central Asian reporting than in their coverage in comparable innovation or resiliency-themed stories.

Others wrote about practices in the newsroom where they had to negotiate always. As another example, Al Jazeera's editorial policy process had more than one layer of review, which was considered by some of the participants as a form of restraint, but as balanced and stuck to the truth. According to one journalist, however, this was not censorship but it was evident that some geopolitical positioning was making some stories difficult to advance.

Nevertheless, the majority of participants found new roles liberating and professionally satisfying, and it wasn't only the improved working conditions, but also an additional opportunity to redefine the way Central Asia is imagined on the world maps.

VI. Identity, Voice and Representation

Bargaining Central Asian Identity in World Media

There is a delicate dance in a sense between their regionality and the international standards of journalism that are experienced by Central Asian journalists in global newsrooms. This being both an insider in their cultural setting and a potential remittance man to the world at large poses opportunities and pressure simultaneously. Although their background usually gives them the right to comment on regional issues, it can also trap them in ethnic or geopolitical skids.

Some of the interviewees complained that not being broadly focused or regarded to the level of covering global issues, they were often called to comment on Central Asia or take on assignments in this direction. So, as it was said by one of the journalists in Kazakhstan:

I would also like to see the migration in Europe or climate changes in Africa and be trusted on these issues. I cannot make my beat be my passport.”

This is more of a bigger problem with the global media: the conflict between specialization and marginalization. Although identity-based ministry makes more sophisticated reporting and narrative possible, it may also have the effect of entrenching editorial silos because the journalist covering a particular region is viewed as being useful only in that ‘sphere.’ (Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. 2016)

Case studies: Crafting International Discourse of Central Asia

Nevertheless, the region has contributed numerous Central Asian journalists who used their media outlets to reorient global conceptions of the region of their origin. A notable case is a BBC World Service reporter who made a long form podcast on post soviet youth identity which is now one of the most downloaded podcasts by the network in that year. The use of both field interviews, archival material and music made the piece humanize the area where most of the headlines about corruption or Russian influence worsen the region.

One of the other journalists in Deutsche Welle produced a multi-lingual series documentary that discussed the water politics in Ferghana Valley. This piece, in addition to being labeled as having some pertinence to the environment, was also commended in that it tried to frame the region as a place of agency, rather than crisis. Some of the study participants perceived such chances as highly satisfying, as reported by one of the reporters, this is almost like redressing the record. (Banerjee, I. 2002)

They also have contributed to the editorial framing of some major events in the world. One of the producers at Al Jazeera, a Kyrgyz, was able to inject a Central Asian angle into the network coverage of the crisis in Ukraine by mentioning the impact it had on regional labor migrants and political blocs. All these interventions demonstrate that transnational journalists may proactively remake their regional framing on the global stage, reversing simplistic or dated framings.

The Conflict of Objectivity and Cultural Solidarity

The journalistic objectivity is a mainstay of most international publications and the Central Asian journalists usually find it hard to decide at which level to present their cultural and emotional outlook. Others pointed to being uncomfortable reporting about authoritarian crackdowns in their home countries and the emotional stress of reporting about a trauma at a distance with a professional tone.

We cannot pretend we are neutral because even our cousins are being affected, said a Tajik journalist who has left the country to work in London.

Such situations reveal the shortcoming of Western ideals of objectivity in journalism particularly to the people whose communities are underreported or incorrectly interpreted. Others were able to incorporate cultural solidarity more obliquely: through the judiciousness of sourcing, by spotlighting local voices, or by correcting tendencies toward bias and decontextualization in story selection.

The emotional and ethical burden of this work was characterised by one participant as a kind of constant interior negotiation: what she called invisible labour. However, they are all in agreement that their dual identity eventually proved to enhance their narration and widen the possibilities of global journalism.

VII. Barriers and Enablers to Career Progression

Institutional Constraints and Systemic Discrimination

Even after their way to the breakthrough into the media institutions of the global visibility, Central Asian reporters often face the problems of structural constraints that hinder their further career growth. Several said they felt as though they were in a mid-level position like producers or fixers or language service correspondents, where they rarely got to come up into editorial board positions or on an international reporting beat.

A number of the respondents complained of implicit discrimination, in which the chances of promotions or international work were disproportionately favored by their Western-born co-workers. There was a tendency to develop a so-called glass ceiling impact even in multicultural newsrooms where diversity was publicly discussed as a positive aspect, especially in cases when a citizen did not hold a European passport or had a non-European accent. This, in the words of one of the respondents:

It is not straight out racism but it has a lot to do with assumptions. People believe I will not be able to understand a story in Latin America or Europe, whereas I lived in three countries.

Another serious institutional constraint was associated with visa and work permits. As the journalists of such countries as Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, they could frequently meet bureaucratic barriers on the way to long-term job contract abroad or accreditation with the press. This immobility further curtailed the trend to special assignments or to possibilities across a boundary to investigations.

The Power of Mentorship, Networks, and Diaspora Support

On the facilitating side, informal networks and schemes of mentorship were critical as they helped Central Asian journalists explore the terrain of international media. Many interviewees attributed their career advancement to mentors in their companies who provided editorial and strategic counsel and helped them get assigned career-enhancing work.

In addition, the regional or language diaspora network provided emotional sustenance and practical advice. WhatsApp assignments, Slack groups, and Telegram channels were among the most frequently mentioned channels where journalists exchanged fellowship news, employment opportunities, and cultural coping tricks.

There was also a description by some journalists of the value of alumni networks of international fellowships, e.g. the Open Society or DW Akademie programs in assisting them in finding freelance work or permanent positions. These groups together established a perception of continuity and unity and in the time when institutional support was not very strong or was simply absent.

Access disparities and the gender aspects

Gender took center stage as a cross-cutting theme in determining the access to opportunities, treatment in the profession and other newsroom relations. Women journalists (and especially those who wore visible religious symbols, or were of more conservative background) were said to experience extra inspections during on-air time, editorial conference, or globally fit.

Some mentioned that few tough news were being assigned to them, one of the respondents wrote:

On numerous occasions, I was requested and invited to report on what was termed as women issues, as though that could be all that I could report on.

Others were faced with harassment and/or condescending attitudes both locally and globally but in the latter, the international organizations normally had more well-developed HR mechanisms to resort to. Positively, some of the women also received an uplift through the women-in-journalism programs that were there to give out mentorship, legal, and leadership exposure. To one participant, supporting each other can be very valuable:

The very fact that another woman in the same newsroom who was also a regional is there, makes a difference. You feel noticed.”

Table 3

Key Barriers and Enablers Reported by Interviewed Journalists

Category	Barriers	Enablers
Institutional	- Editorial gatekeeping - Visa and accreditation hurdles	- Fellowship alumni networks - Bilingual training programs
Social/Professional Networks	- Isolation in multicultural teams - Lack of peer visibility	- Diaspora journalist communities - Slack/Telegram job forums

Career Advancement	- Glass ceiling in leadership roles - Underrepresentation in newsrooms	- Mentorship from senior editors - Internal diversity programs
Gender Dynamics	- Gendered story assignments - Implicit bias in promotions	- Women’s media collectives - Peer-led solidarity and training hubs

VIII. Future Prospects and Research Directions

The Emergence of Multilingual and Hybrid Journalists

The need to have multilingual journalists with mixed identity attributes is likely to boom as newsrooms across the world continuously coerce to have diversified and transnational reporting teams. The journalists of Central Asia are in a perfect place to serve this niche as they can fluently communicate in areas such as their indigenous languages, English, and Russian, as well as the Turkic languages. They have cultural dexterity and narrative versatility to turn local complexities into stories that one can relate to really well.

This is also the emergence of the so-called hybrid journalists who execute the combination of field reporting with online production, activism, and content entrepreneurship. A lot of the respondents said that they have tried podcasting, vlogging, and cross-platform storytelling, frequently beyond the demands of their day-to-day jobs. These trends mark the realignment of hierarchical structures in a newsroom towards fluid, portfolio careers and more so in diaspora career professionals.

Digital Freelance Economy and Remote Newsrooms

The COVID-19 lockdown and the revolution of workflow clouds have made remote newsrooms acceptable, which is by far more practical than having to change their location to work on the stories worldwide in person. It is a significant advantage for Central Asian journalists, who can be restricted in traveling and acquiring visas, yet they can access fast internet and digital production resources. Substack, Patreon, and YouTube are alternative sources of revenue and editorial autonomy.

But digital freelancing means precarity and uneven access as well. On the loss of the institutional safety nets of full-time employment, very few journalists can face late payments, a laxity of legal protection, and non-stop competition. Irrespective of these dangers, a number of the interviewees took advantage of the independence and exposure that accompanies digital platforms, particularly when they had an underrepresented story in conventional media.

Implications for Journalism Education in Central Asia

To prepare future journalists for transnational careers, journalism schools in Central Asia must adapt curricula to global media realities. Participants emphasized the need for:

- Multilingual instruction (especially English, Russian, and local languages)
- Training in podcasting, data journalism, and multimedia production
- Exposure to international journalistic ethics and human rights frameworks
- Partnerships with global institutions for student exchanges and internships

One former Al Jazeera journalist suggested incorporating cross-cultural communication modules, to help students navigate diverse editorial teams. Another recommended a “diaspora journalism track,” where students learn how to report on migration, identity, and transnational solidarity.

Areas for Future Research

This study highlights several gaps worthy of academic inquiry: Comparative studies between Central Asian journalists and those from other post-Soviet or Global South contexts, Longitudinal research tracking career progression and burnout in diaspora journalists, Quantitative analysis of Central Asian representation in international media coverage, Media ethnographies exploring newsroom dynamics and editorial decision-making in hybrid teams

Understanding these dimensions will not only enrich journalism studies but also inform inclusive media policies, international fellowships, and newsroom diversity strategies. As the media landscape continues to shift, further research can illuminate how Central Asian journalists are not just adapting to global norms but actively shaping them.

IX. Conclusion

This study explored the complex journeys of Central Asian journalists transitioning from local newsrooms to international media platforms. Through qualitative analysis of their career trajectories, the research highlights both the systemic barriers and enabling factors that shape transnational journalistic mobility. From foundational experiences in state-run broadcasters to professional reinvention through international fellowships and diaspora

networks, the study sheds light on how these journalists navigate new editorial ecosystems while carrying with them regional knowledge and hybrid identities.

The findings demonstrate that while Central Asian journalists often face institutional constraints — including implicit bias, limited access to leadership roles, and visa challenges — they also benefit from strong mentorship, language training, and increasingly digital pathways to global exposure. Their dual role as cultural insiders and transnational communicators enables them to enrich global narratives, challenge Western-centric frames, and humanize underrepresented regions like Central Asia. However, this identity is also a site of tension, especially in navigating objectivity, advocacy, and personal belonging in stories that intersect with their roots.

Theoretically, the research contributes to literature on global journalism, post-Soviet media transitions, and professional identity in multicultural spaces. Practically, it suggests the need for more inclusive editorial cultures, flexible visa pathways, and reformed journalism education that prepares future reporters for global careers. It also underlines the value of alternative storytelling formats — podcasts, hybrid media, diaspora collaborations — in amplifying marginalized voices.

In an era of increasing mobility and digital disruption, Central Asian journalists are not just crossing borders but also expanding the boundaries of global journalism itself. Their stories reflect a broader movement toward a media landscape that is more plural, polycentric, and responsive to voices from the periphery.

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