

## Global Journalist: How other countries view the 2020 U.S. election

**Abstract:** This Oct. 29, 2020 episode features interviews by Missouri School of Journalism students in Beverly Horvit's International Reporting class with reporters from around the world about the 2020 presidential campaign. The journalists are all alumni of the Alfred Friendly Press Partners fellowship program or the Hubert Humphrey fellowship program.

**Host:** Isaac Robinson

### Guests:

- [Pierre Dupenor](#)
- [Juan Luis Garcia Hernandez](#)
- [Sabenzile Nakambule](#)
- [Camille Elemia](#)
- [Alexey Gorbachev](#)
- [Noreen Shams](#)
- [Ha Thi Thu Tran](#)
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- [Paul Udoto Nyongesa](#)
- [Adetola Kayode](#)
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**ISAAC ROBINSON:** Hello, and welcome to The Global Journalist, a show by journalists, about journalists and for journalists — and the people who depend on our work. I'm Isaac Robinson, one of this episode's producers.

Today, we'll be taking a look at the U.S. presidential election, but from a different perspective. Over the past few weeks, students in Professor Beverly Horvit's International Reporting class at the Missouri School of Journalism have chatted with reporters from about 20 different countries about how people from outside the United States are responding to this year's campaign. Most of the journalists have visited and trained in the U.S. as part of the Humphrey Fellows program sponsored by the U.S. State Department or the Friendly Fellows program based at MU.

First, we will look at whether or not countries understand how the U.S. elections work. Does the electoral college make sense to them? What is their perception of how the U.S. runs its elections? We also asked about elections in their countries and if citizens of their nations have a preferred candidate for US president this year. We are now joined by Fernando Narro to discuss what we found. Fernando, welcome.

**NARRO NARRO ROMAN:** Glad to be here.

**ROBINSON:** Let's jump right into this year's elections and answer the big question on everyone's mind. What did these journalists say when asked if their fellow citizens preferred one presidential candidate over another?

**NARRO:** Well, people in different countries prefer one or the other based on national interests. Each candidate has potential benefits to each country, and I'll use the case of Haiti as an example. Pierre Dupenor said many Haitians took advantage of a program called Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, that allowed them to leave Haiti after the country was devastated by an earthquake in 2010. The Trump administration ended TPS for Haitians in 2017. Dupenor said that's why a majority of people in Haiti prefer Biden.

**PIERRE DUPENOR:** "Haitian people generally think that with democrats they will have smooth immigration policies that can benefit the Haitian people. As you know, we have more than one million Haitians living in the US and part of them are undocumented people. So, part of them, as well, live under the TPS regime. So, it's a perception that Democrats will be more favorable toward Haitian people and the Haitian community."

**NARRO:** Juan Luis Garcia Hernandez, a reporter from Mexico, made a similar point, but added that what makes Mexicans favor Joe Biden is not only what they perceive as better immigration policies, but the rhetoric toward Mexicans that President Trump uses.

**JUAN LUIS GARCIA HERNANDEZ:** "There's actually been some polls and Reforma, one of the largest national newspapers in the country, did one in July, and 66% of people preferred Joe Biden over Trump. A lot of it has to do with the president's rhetoric, being aggressive and belligerent toward Mexican's, especially over the last campaign. And those insults, those verbal aggressions have remained in Mexicans' collective memory."

**ROBINSON:** So, what are some reasons people would prefer President Trump?

**NARRO:** I'll give you an example. In South Africa, journalist Sabenzile Nakambule, told us President Trump's rhetoric like build the wall and close the borders resonates with people who think immigrants from countries like Zimbabwe and Malawi are taking jobs away from South Africans.

**SEBENZILE NKAMBULE:** “This message of ‘keep them out’, you know, ‘they’re taking our jobs, close the borders’, that kind of rhetoric resonates with people like that. So you have people who listen to Trump and think, ‘yeah, that’s a leader.’”

**NARRO:** We saw the same thing in the Philippines as well. Camille Elemia said it's difficult to tell who the majority of Filipinos support, because support for President Trump is real among many in the island nation.

But, in my opinion, the most remarkable assessment came from Alexey Gorbachev, a journalist from Russia. He mentioned the way President Trump has handled protests for social justice, specifically the Black Lives Matter movement. There are Russians who see him as a strong leader because of the aggressive rhetoric and willingness to use force in these situations. Gorbachev says they are well received by Russians.

**ALEXEY GORBACHEV:** “These protests, it made people feel like that Trump is the candidate who will be able to control it just because of his statements. Like here in the US, you can understand that it's like just that kind of populism and like cheap, like, it looks

**cheap, and he hardly can implement any of what he proposes rather than lead to more tensions. But in Russia, if he looks like a strong leader who is willing to control the situation.”**

**NARRO:** This example illustrates what many experts have pointed out over the past few years, a growing trend globally of people being drawn to authoritarian leaders.

**ROBINSON:** So, now let’s talk about the election process in the US. What was the general perception of the journalists our class talked to? Did they think people outside the U.S. understand how the U.S. elects a president?

**NARRO:** Lots of journalists said the outcome of the 2016 election confused people in their countries, and brought some of the differences to light. Most of their countries have a system in which one of two things happen. They either elect a leader through a national election, the winner being the person who gets the most votes, or they have parliamentary systems, in which the head of government in their countries is the person who leads the majority party. So it didn’t make sense when Hillary won the popular vote, but lost the election. Here’s something Noreen Shams, a journalist from Pakistan told us:

**NOREEN SHAMS:** **“So that was really hard for us to understand how the popular vote [was] actually won by Hillary Clinton in 2016, but Electoral College voting was very much a high margin for Donald Trump. So he got, he had to win the election.”**

**NARRO:** So lots of people still don't understand the U.S. election process, but there are many people now who have learned about the Electoral College, and even though they may not understand it fully, they know the U.S. election process is unique.

**ROBINSON:** Very interesting stuff there. Thanks Fernando.

**NARRO:** Thanks.

**ROBINSON:** Now we will be going to our reporter Jack Kosowski, who has focused on the ways people in other countries are getting news about the election. We wanted to know how different platforms are being used and how the message changes from platform to platform. In addition, we asked journalists how social media affects the elections news and the elections in their country. Thanks for joining us, Jack.

**JACK KOSOWSKI:** Thank you, Isaac. People all over the world are interested in the U.S. election for many different reasons. Some people are watching more closely than others, and they're getting news in a variety of ways.

**ROBINSON:** Yeah, so, what are some of the different ways people are getting news about the U.S. election and what are some of the impacts?

**KOSOWSKI:** Where people go to get their information about the U.S. election varies a lot from country to country. Typically, people get their news about the election from Western media, state

run agencies, or social media. In Vietnam, for example, many people get their news from online sources, but the stories are translated from traditional U.S. media sources, say for example like the New York Times or The Washington Post. This is because state run media doesn't cover the US elections very thoroughly. Journalist Ha Thi Thu Tran describes the U.S. election coverage in Vietnam.

**HA THI THU TRAN:** “In my observation, the U.S. presidential election is one of much daily news in Vietnam. Especially on the internet, except for the researchers readers who love political news. Most readers and viewers see news about the U.S. presidential elections as a daily news not too hot. They watch with having the more information and because of curiosity. So, I think the online newspapers explode and translate election news from different U.S. press sources such as the New York Times, U.S. Today, Washington Post, AP, and the US Illustrators handle in the form of news not to [inaudible] primarily via state media that don't cover too much this election in Vietnam.”

**ROBINSON:** Interesting, and what about social media? Are there a lot of people who are getting their news from social media now?

**KOSOWSKI:** Yes, and it's interesting because different countries have different relationships with news on social media. In some countries with strict government regulation of news, people are turning to social media for their news because it's not affiliated with government run media. People in these countries feel social media is one of the only places to find unbiased news. Russian journalist, Alexy Gorbachev said this during an interview:

**ALEXEY GORBACHEV: “Social media, it's one of the sources where people can get unbiased information or like alternative information, and mostly like Russian opposition, and those who are against the government, they get information from social media.**

**ROBINSON:** Just a reminder that you're listening to Global Journalist. I'm Isaac Robinson, one of the producers of this week's show. In this episode we're talking to journalists from around the world about how they and their countries are responding to this year's U.S. presidential campaign. You can hear more Global Journalist on [kbia.org](http://kbia.org), like us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter and Spotify. And you can check out our website at [globaljournalist.org](http://globaljournalist.org). Now, back to today's program. We just heard Russian journalist Alexei Gorbachev described social media as an antidote to state run news networks in his country. In other countries, people see social media as a landscape for unverified and just factually incorrect information. Journalist Juan Luis Garcia Hernandez from Mexico explained some of these issues with social media in his country.

**JUAN LUIS GARCIA HERNANDEZ: “Especially in older generations, a lot of the content and viral texts they see on WhatsApp is taken as facts. The issue does not seem to be of an educational gap, but an inability to discern what is a trustworthy source. Whatever they see online is taken as fact, especially if there isn't anyone from their personal inner circle to fact check that information. And that's a big problem.”**

**KOSOWSKI:** And this brings up the concept of media literacy. With so many different media sources publishing news stories, people have difficulty discerning the difference between credible stories and the ones that are just factually incorrect.



**ROBINSON:** So, are there people who aren't following the U.S. elections, and why?

**KOSOWSKI:** Yeah, and there's people around the world that just don't follow the U.S. elections, and there's a few different reasons as to why this is the case. One of the biggest reasons is that the U.S. election only makes the news when it relates to the people within the country. Kieran Somvanshi, a journalist from India, explains this.

**KIERAN SOMVANSHI:** If you are looking at, like, let me be honest, for the average Indian, it doesn't matter. They don't follow but depending on what the latest news is from Trump, if there is a new tweet or something which directly impacts India, then definitely makes news. Like Kamala Harris recently became the nominee for the Democrats for the vice president position. So that was a development that was intensely followed by the Indian media as well as the people because she is from an Indian origin family.

**KOSOWSKI:** This was also true in the 2008 and the 2012 election. Paul Udoto Nyongesa, a journalist from Kenya, said the Kenyan people followed these elections particularly closely because President Barack Obama's father was from Kenya. So we've seen people getting their

election news in a lot of different ways. It's really important to look at the different ways people get news, because each platform has its advantages, but also its disadvantages.

**ROBINSON:** Thank you, Jack, for coming on the show.

**KOSOWSKI:** My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**ROBINSON:** Up next, we have Isabella Paxton, who will be discussing the impacts of the U.S. election on different parts of the world. Thank you for joining us, Isabella.

**PAXTON:** Thank you for having me.

**ROBINSON:** So, we've already discussed earlier how people around the world view the U.S. election, but does it actually affect them?

**PAXTON:** Yes, of course. The US election affects people's lives all over the world in a lot of different ways. Some of the biggest things people are concerned about are trade, aid, immigration, and other symbolic reasons.

**ROBINSON:** Ok, well, which should we start with first?

**PAXTON:** See it's interesting because the relationships countries have with the US for trade, aid, and immigration are interconnected. A lot of countries mentioned the importance of a

bilateral relationship with the U.S., which is essentially both countries agreeing to recognize each other as countries and then regulating things like trade, aid, and immigration. The dynamic of this relationship varies from country to country. The U.S. has the biggest economy in the world, and this creates a power imbalance for a lot of countries. Many countries rely partially on the U.S. for trade, aid, and immigration but the U.S. doesn't necessarily rely on them. Sebenzile Nkambule, a journalist from South Africa, explained this complicated relationship.

**SEBENZILE NKAMBULE: “Yeah, it definitely matters. Again, it's not for the, for the common man in the streets. For them, the link or the or the, the why it matters, it is not obvious. But it matters in the sense that, obviously, we are a developing country, and our relationship with the US wanting to kind of think of bilateral relations, it's obviously there's a huge power imbalance, the power resting with the U.S. But so with us it's about aid right. So if you have a head of state who then you know, in terms of his deployments, the you know, the ambassadors that he deploys to the different countries, how we relate to our countries, all of that matters, right. So, here you had Trump call our countries, African countries, s\*\*\*hole countries, right? Yeah. And again, frowned upon, because, because of the power imbalance, it was, it was inconsequential for, for the US, but it's quite awkward here.”**

**PAXTON:** Another example of this sort of trickle down effect of the presidency came from our interview with Kenyan journalist Paul Udoto Nyongesa. He said the president has a huge impact on how financial aid is distributed to health organizations in Kenya and other countries. The big issue is over abortion. Many of these organizations are pro-choice and they do offer abortion

services to women in the country, but they also provide a wide variety of other services to people. These organizations tend to get less funding from conservative administrations because they disagree about abortion.

**PAUL UDOTO NYONGESA:** “For us, the support that comes here touches on broader health issues is tied with the broader health, it is not just specifically on abortion, right. But abortion makes it like the poison chalice under the broad health, because the U.S. is one of our biggest supporters in terms of HIV prevention and treatment, and all groups that support reproductive health. But when those restrictions come in, then a lot of the civil side programs that deal with health here almost come to a standstill because their main sponsor withdraws that support because of the agenda of pro-life. A lot of the groups that are working here are pro-choice. And so if the main identity the U.S. is pro-life, then most of the groups that derive their funding from the U.S. become handicaps.”

**PAXTON:** So even though the president may not be making an impact on each country personally, there are lots other things in their country that eventually have an impact on people’s lives.

**ROBINSON:** Yeah, okay. That’s interesting to consider. Are there any ways the president directly affects people in other countries.

**PAXTON:** One example of the president having a pretty direct effect on people’s lives was with his travel bans. Many people are unhappy with immigration and travel restrictions President

Trump placed on their countries. They favor Biden, and the Democratic Party in general, because they believe these restrictions will be loosened. Adetola Kayode, a journalist from Nigeria, discussed this issue.

**ADETOLA KAYODE: “Remember that was under this administration, that they restricted Visa, Visa applications and requirements, and some certain bands, you know, when also put in place. No country will really, you know, love that.”**

**PAXTON:** On the other hand, Kayode also said one possible benefit of a conservative president is they may be more willing to help Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram.

**ROBINSON:** You're listening to Global Journalist, a program produced in the studios of the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism. I'm Isaac Robinson. This week, my classmates and Professor Beverly Horvit's international reporting class are sharing insights from interviews with some 20 reporters from all over the world. We talked to them about how people in their countries view the U.S. presidential election. If you like what you hear, check out more Global Journalist on KBIA, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Spotify. You can also find more stories on our website, [globaljournalist.org](http://globaljournalist.org). Now, back to our conversation with MU journalism student, Isabella Paxton. Isabella, it's interesting to hear that some countries aren't necessarily picking a side, but more so looking at the benefits each candidate can have for their country.

**PAXTON:** Yes, that's definitely a trend we saw with some countries. There are, however, some countries with a large amount of the population that specifically supports one candidate. For example, in Montenegro, the Serbian part of the population has a general dislike for the Democratic Party. Journalist Radovan Bogojevic explained this to us.

**RADOVAN BOGOJEVIC:** He has a bit symbolical influence, but that's a long story [inaudible]. So, Montenegro's part of Yugoslavia at some point, and we were involved in wars in 1999. And then we got bombed by NATO, led by Americans. And at that time, Bill Clinton was the president. So especially for the Serbs that are living in my country, and it's like 30 something percent of Serbs. They have really, really bad memory of Bill Clinton and of democrats and Bill Clinton. So when Trump won in 2016, I think Serbian part is part of Montenegro, which was Serbian, they were one of the rare countries in the world that was actually really, really happy because Trump won. Because they felt they hated Bill Clinton, they hated Hillary.

**PAXTON:** That being said, not everyone follows politics very closely.

**ROBINSON:** Interesting. If some people aren't following political movements very closely, are they following social ones?

**PAXTON:** Absolutely. The social movements that have sprung up in the United States caused a ripple effect around the world, for better or for worse. One of these is the Black Lives Matter protests that have begun throughout the summer after the death of George Floyd.

**RADOVAN BOGOJEVIC:** “And part of people really loved it the people here fighting for the global cause, but part of people and it's a really big chunk of the population, thought that it's a bit hypocritical that someone is wanting someone in Montenegro supporting some African Americans in the U.S., while, for example, people from a descent in Montenegro are sometimes really being discriminated against on a similar level. It's also systemic racism, I would say. And nobody cares about it, but you would go because you feel like, okay, in all European countries, you have now BLM support protests or whatever, we should do it. So, part of the people thought it's hypocritical.”

**ROBINSON:** It's interesting to hear that social movements started in the U.S. have made it to other countries, and how they bring other social issues to light.

**PAXTON:** Yes, exactly. The U.S. policies and personalities that matter to these countries vary widely, but it's clear people around the world feel that they have a stake in the U.S. election because these things have an impact on their lives. And just like those of us in the U.S., they're waiting for Nov. 3 to see what happens.

**ROBINSON:** Thank you, Isabella.

**PAXTON:** Thank you.

**ROBINSON:** Well, that's all the time we have for today. It's been really interesting to hear all the different ways people around the world are following the U.S. election. Through these interviews we've seen how not only the election itself impacts people, but also how the coverage of the election can have an impact. The results will be in in less than a week. And whether President Trump is reelected for a second term, or Joe Biden begins his first, we will be looking to see if expectations of people from around the world are met on Tuesday and beyond.

We want to thank Trevor Hook for his assistance producing the show, Professor Beverly Horvit for helping us arrange the interviews, and the journalists from all over the world for taking the time to remind us that next week's election matters to more than just Americans. With so many people around the world paying so much attention to our election, it would be a shame if you didn't exercise your right to participate. Don't forget to vote.

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