

Maria Grajcar Istvanova

Institute of Oriental Studies

Slovak Academy of Sciences

ORCID: 0000-0002-4914-5353

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60018/Hemi.KMRK9255>

2449-8645

HEMISPHERES

No. 40, 2025

Reading the Belt and Road Initiative Through Slovak Eyes: A Study of Its Initial Portrayal in Slovak Media

Abstract

This paper explores the image of China's Belt and Road Initiative within the Slovak context based on the media coverage in three periodicals: Pravda, SME, and Dennik N. In order to investigate the transformation of its representation in Slovak media during an early phase of the initiative's implementation, which was marked by initial expectations and generally positive attitude toward it, the textual material gathered for this preliminary study comprises articles published from 2013 to 2016. The purpose of this study is three-fold: to explore the extent of reporting on the initiative in the Slovak periodicals analysed, to identify the key topics of reference related to the initiative, and to advance our understanding of presenting the initiative to the general public in the form of newspaper articles.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, China, media discourse, sentiment, Slovakia.

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), first launched in 2013 as the One Belt, One Road, was created with the aim of establishing new trade routes and strengthening cooperation between China and numerous countries worldwide. In addition to countries forming the corridor along the historical Silk Road, this initiative also includes partner countries throughout Europe, as well as in Africa and Southeast Asia under the umbrella of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

The promotion of the BRI, which was based on *five areas of cooperation* (policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and strengthened people-to-people ties), has been fostered through numerous international forums in China and countries sympathising with the initiative (cf. China Law Info, 2015; Xi 2013a, 2013b). Nevertheless, due to the indefinite implementation strategies of the cooperation frameworks and projects, the prevalence of the initially positive responses of numerous European countries has been replaced by a more cautious attitude, and perceptions of the BRI has started to diversify (Arduino, 2016; Chen et al., 2019; Grieger, 2016; Jiang, 2022).

Since the launch of China's BRI in 2013, Slovakia's perceptions of the project has reflected a complex interplay between pragmatic economic considerations, political orientations, and broader public ambivalence. It has evolved from cautious optimism to pragmatic ambivalence, reflecting shifts in domestic politics, EU–China relations, and changing global geopolitics. Initially, between 2013 and 2016, Slovak policymakers viewed the BRI primarily through an economic lens, emphasizing its potential to enhance connectivity, trade, and foreign investment (Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2015). Given the former inclusion of Slovakia in the cooperation format introduced in 2012 as 16+1 with the objective to intensify the cooperation of China with CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) countries, it is not surprising that Slovakia also expressed its interest in joining the BRI shortly after its official launch, and was one of the first countries that signed the memorandum of understanding in 2015. During this early phase, government discourse was generally optimistic, highlighting opportunities for infrastructure development, logistics, and participation in the railway network connecting Europe with China (cf. Kironská and Turcsány, 2017; Kelemen et al., 2020; Šimalčík 2021). Nevertheless, project outcomes remained rather limited – based on the data provided by Eurostat, EU Direct Investment, an overview for our timeframe, 2013–2016 – Slovakia received a relatively lower amount of Chinese direct investment compared with its neighboring countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic (Jaklič and Svetličič, 2019).

As a result of intensified contact between Europe and China, the BRI aroused great interest among the general public as well as in academic circles. Moreover, various media on national and international levels have devoted considerable attention to the initiative and its impact not only from the global perspective, but also considering each country's specific circumstances. Therefore, the BRI can be perceived to a great extent an inseparable part of media discourse on international cooperation with China for almost a decade after its official launch (Ge, 2021; Li, 2018; Zhang, 2023).

The main aim of this paper is to examine the transformation of the BRI's representation in Slovak media during the early stage of its implementation, a period marked by heightened expectations and a generally positive attitudes toward it. The analysis is based on a corpus of articles published between 2013 and 2016 in the selected periodicals aiming to capture the initial phase of media reporting on activities and narratives related to its promotion in Slovakia. By mapping this early media discourse, the study seeks to establish a baseline for understanding subsequent developments and shifts in Slovak media representation of the BRI marked by a gradual change in attitude from positive to more cautious and critical, which can be further explored through the lens of

Slovakian foreign policy and its ties with China. The present dataset represents a basis for designing a specialised *ViewBRI Corpus* as a part of a research project which is still in progress (2024–2026), and it will comprise articles published from 2013 to 2024 to allow for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of the media outlets.

2. Role of Media Discourse Analysis

Cultural studies understands culture not as a fixed or static set of practices but as a dynamic field of signification in which meanings are produced, contested, and negotiated. In this light, media discourse analysis is an important research tool in this field because it provides a critical framework for examining how meaning, ideology, and power circulate through media texts. Since media is not a neutral transmitter of information, but an active agent in shaping collective understandings of the world, discourse analysis enables scholars to uncover how linguistic and semiotic choices frame issues, define public opinion, and legitimise particular ideologies and viewpoints (cf. Fairclough, 1995a; Foucault, 1972; Hall, 1997). In this sense, media discourse analysis examines how institutional structures, audience practices, and historical conditions shape and are shaped by discursive formations, and reveals how these texts articulate and reproduce different ideologies. This contextual sensitivity allows scholars to investigate the connections between culture, ideology, and political economy, reinforcing the cultural studies commitment to understanding media as both a site of domination and a potential space for democratic participation (cf. Hall, 1973; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Furthermore, media discourse analysis serves as a key methodological tool for understanding representation and identity formation. Cultural studies emphasizes that identities – such as nation, class, or gender – are discursively constructed. Media texts, varying from advertising to social media, contribute to the normalisation of certain identities, while excluding others. At the same time these identical spaces can also foster resistance. By foregrounding the relationship between discourse, ideology, and identity, media discourse analysis equips scholars with the methodological tools to decode the politics embedded in everyday media communication. In doing so, it advances the central aim of cultural studies: to reveal the cultural mechanisms through which societies construct, contest, and transform their realities (Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 1997; Kellner, 1995).

Earlier research focused on the perception of the BRI in the media has been predominantly concerned with analysis of media discourse in Western countries (Arifon et al., 2019; Miao, 2021; Herrero and Xu, 2019; Zhang,

2021), and a study of the BRI's image as presented by Slovak media is still quite limited in breadth and scope (cf. Kironská and Turcsány, 2017; Matura, 2018). Considering that Slovakia belongs to those countries that have declared an interest in the further development of cooperation ties with China from the early phase of the initiative's implementation, this paper aims to further explore the discourse on the BRI in our chosen Slovak periodicals. Following Slovakia's interest in cooperation with China, it is to be expected that the leading digital periodicals should also have paid attention to the initiative, its prospects and promotional activities. Taking the articles from *Pravda*, *SME*, and *Dennik N* as examples, this research provides an introductory analysis of the BRI's image in these Slovak periodicals based on the qualitative and quantitative evidence retrieved from the collected textual data.

3. Methodology

The selection of these periodicals was primarily driven by the reporting coverage on the BRI aiming to achieve a comparable number of articles among these periodicals based on a preliminary search query of leading digital periodicals by using the keywords *Jedno pásmo, jedna cesta/Jeden pás jedna cesta* (Belt and Road Initiative, *Hodvábna cesta* (Silk Road), and *Nová Hodvábna cesta* (New Silk Road). In addition, considering a recent public opinion survey on media brand trust conducted by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, the selected periodicals reached a comparable public trust display as follows: *Pravda* 42%, *SME* 41%, and *Dennik N* 36% (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2024). The political orientation and ideological stances of the selected periodicals were not the predominant determining feature for their selection and inclusion in the dataset.

The purpose of this study is to advance our understanding of presenting the initiative to the general public in the form of newspaper articles by:

- investigating the frequency of articles published on the BRI from 2013 to 2016;
- determining their share among the studied periodicals;
- identifying the key subjects linked to the initiative based on the predominant topic referred to in each article;
- analysing the periodical's attitude based on the collocational patterns when referring to the BRI.

The methodological framework incorporates the well-grounded approaches of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis with close reading to establish

the connections between the BRI and the predominant topics that have been discussed, as well as to explore the overall attitude of these periodicals towards the initiative. Corpus linguistics was chosen to facilitate the management and interpretation of the data supported by quantitative evidence (McEnery and Hardie, 2012; Meyer, 2002). In order to prepare the foundations of the specialised *ViewBRI Corpus*, and to test the feasibility of the proposed methodology, the collection of the pilot dataset was carried out based on the following criteria:

- periodical title: SME, *Dennik N*, and *Pravda*;
- publication year: 2013-2016;
- language: only articles written in Slovak were considered;
- use of at least one of the following keywords: *Jedno pásmo, jedna cesta/ Jeden pás jedna cesta* (Belt and Road Initiative), *Hodvábna cesta* (Silk Road), *Nová Hodvábna cesta* (New Silk Road).

Each text file was stored and encoded with a set of metadata: year, newspaper name, article headline, and key subject (based on the close-reading analysis) to enable filtering across these variables and facilitate the interdisciplinary use of the gathered data for future research. Prior to the creation of the *ViewBRI Corpus* planned in the later stage of research, the information comprising the above-mentioned variables was stored and managed in an Excel file. The preliminary data-processing workflow and the categorisation of variables represent an important part of the preparatory work prior to the corpus creation and design of the query options. Given the nature of the present research, the variables were used to facilitate the quantitative data evaluation, as well as complement the qualitative analysis of the media discourse on the BRI.

With regard to the qualitative study of the textual material, discourse analysis that examines language and its function in communication was chosen (Brown and Yule, 1983; Johnstone 2018; Widdowson, 2007), to enable the study of the language in use when referring to the BRI from a broader perspective. Since discourse analysis takes into consideration context, cultural and social framework, and goes beyond the formal aspects of linguistics by combining the study of discourse, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and semantics, it allows one to take into account assumptions related to the communicative event and the possible impact of the text with regard to its interpretation and reader perception (Brown and Yule, 1983; Cook, 1989; Fairclough, 1995b).

Lastly, a close reading of the textual material was carried out to identify the basic communication content, to examine the overall text organisation, and label the linguistic elements used for depicting the BRI and the key subjects

of interest with regard to the initiative so that the subject examined was done so in context. This data-driven approach, which includes both quantitative and qualitative exploration of the textual material, aims to provide a comprehensive characterisation of the BRI's image presented by the Slovak periodicals, as shown in the following section.

4. Research Data and Findings

The pilot dataset comprises 51 articles in total and the preliminary research findings are displayed from the perspective of the frequency of articles published from 2013 to 2016, their share among the analysed periodicals in total and across the years based on the year of publication. This section also includes data that display the diversity of the key subjects linked to the presentation of the BRI based on the predominant topic in each article. The section concludes with the presentation of the perception of the BRI determined by the collocational patterns with the keywords referring to the BRI based on the general attitude applied to its presentation supplemented by mapping its development across the years and according to the newspaper type.

As Figure 1 shows, the majority of articles (53%, 27 articles) were published in 2016, which marks the last year of the studied period of the pilot dataset. The second highest number of articles was published in 2015 (37%, 19 articles) followed by comparably lower distribution rates in 2014 (8%, 4 articles) and 2013 (2%, 1 article). Despite the official announcement of the BRI in 2013 (China Law Info, 2015; Xi 2013a), the pilot dataset shows that the Slovak periodicals started to report on the initiative only later, when the activities for its promotion became more evident and they were often related to the 16+1 initiative launched in CEE region (cf. Chen et al., 2019; Kironská and Turcsány 2017).

Considering the division of the articles among the three periodicals published from 2013 to 2016 shown in Figure 2, the predominant number of articles was found in *SME* (55%, 28 articles) followed by *Pravda* (35%, 18 articles) and *Dennik N* (10%, 5 articles).

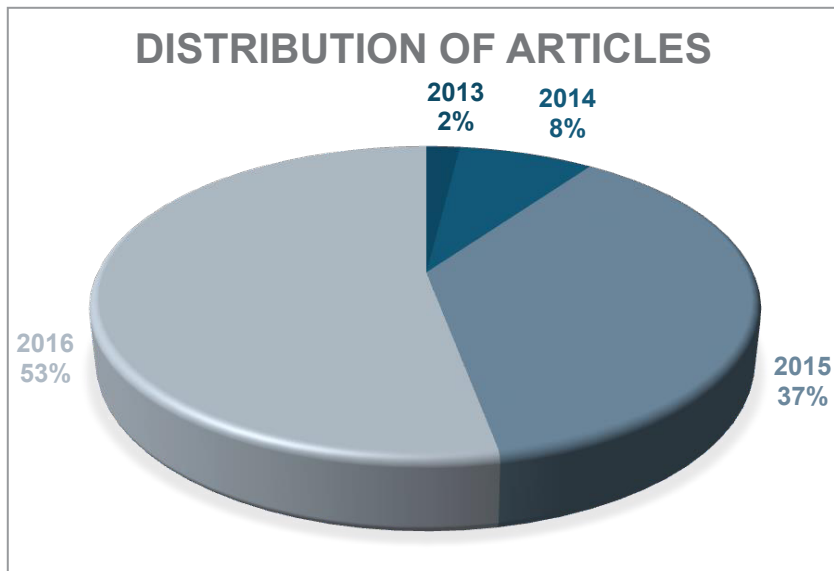


Fig. 1. Overall distribution of articles (2013–2016)

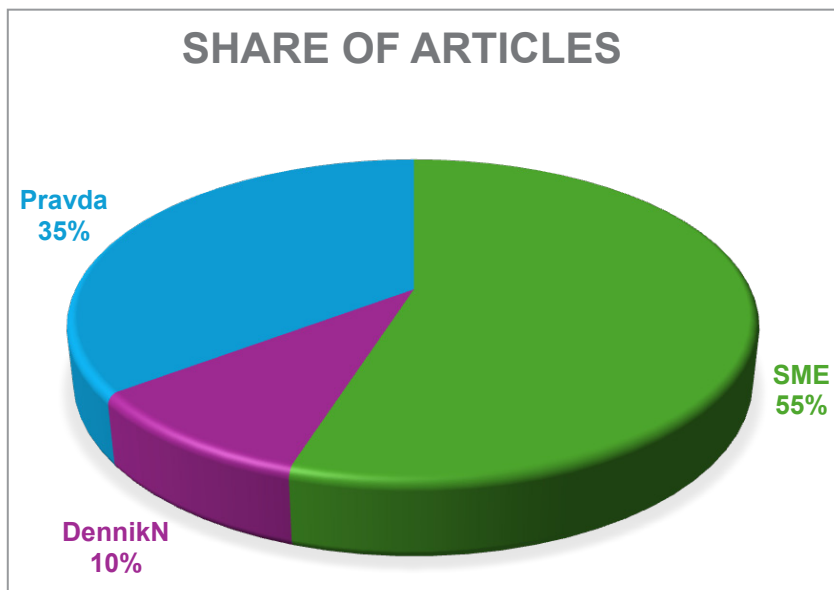


Fig. 2. Share of articles in the periodicals (2013–2016)

Figure 3 shows a more comprehensive overview of the article publication rates and share among the periodicals studied, not only based on the year of publication, but also displaying the newspaper type. As shown in the figure below, the only newspaper with a constantly rising tendency in article publication across the years is *SME*. Despite the low number of published articles in the first three years of the period studied (1 article in 2013 and 2014 respectively, and 5 articles in 2015), it represents the most active periodical in 2016, with 21 articles published in total.

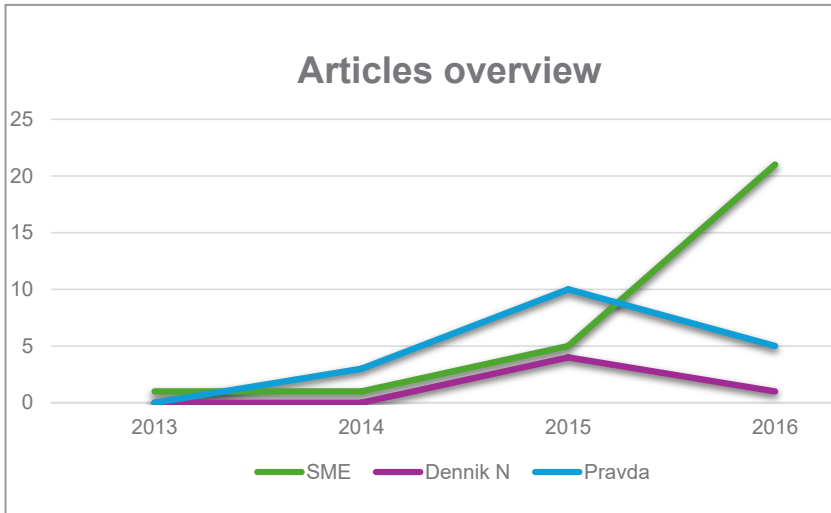


Fig. 3. Articles overview (2013–2016)

On the other hand, *Dennik N* and *Pravda* share to a certain extent a similar curve of article distribution (see Fig. 3), although, their publication record displays certain differences as well. The similarity in article distribution discussing the BRI is found in 2013, when both periodicals, *Pravda* and *Dennik N*, did not publish any articles. Regarding the subsequent years and the publication record in *Pravda*, 3 articles are found in 2014, and the peak of the publication record can be found in 2015, with 10 articles, followed by a decline in 2016, with 5 articles. The least active publication record can be found in *Dennik N*, which published the BRI-themed articles first in 2015 (4 articles), with the peak number of articles followed by a decline in 2016 (1 article).

Figure 4 displays the categorisation of key subjects linked to the presentation of the BRI in all articles, without taking into consideration the newspaper type and the year of publication, to provide a general overview of the topics linked to the presentation of the initiative. The most common topics are economics

and business cooperation, followed by international relations and logistics. On the other hand, less frequent key subjects used for the presentation of the BRI's image are geopolitics and infrastructure.

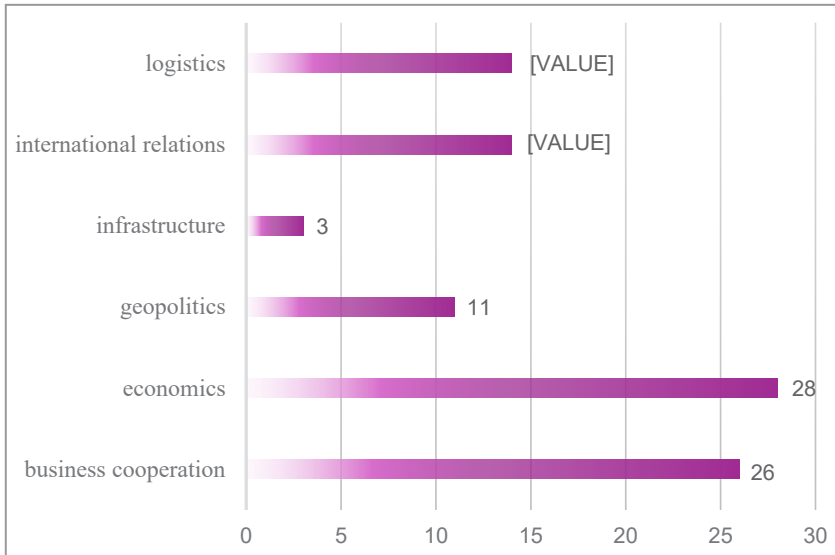


Fig. 4. Key subjects related to the BRI's presentation

As shown in Figure 5, the overall attitude towards the initiative was examined based on the following scale: positive, neutral to positive, neutral, neutral to negative, and negative. The predominant categories are marked by neutral (35%, 18 articles) and neutral to positive (27%, 14 articles) attitudes followed by positive attitude (18%, 9 articles). An identical number of articles was found in the categories of neutral to negative and negative attitudes (10%, 5 articles respectively). Based on the figure below, the media discourse on the BRI in the introductory phase can be perceived as rather neutral without a strong position against or in favour of the initiative.

In order to gain a better understanding of attitudinal development across the years, Figure 6 displays the attitude categories based on the year of publication. Because of the limited number of articles published in 2013 and 2014, the attitudes were also less diversified and revolved around a neutral perception of the BRI instead of showing a stronger standpoint. In 2013, there was only one short article reporting on the initiative in a neutral manner, whereas in 2014 there were two neutral articles, one article reporting in a neutral to positive manner, and one article formulated in a negative way.

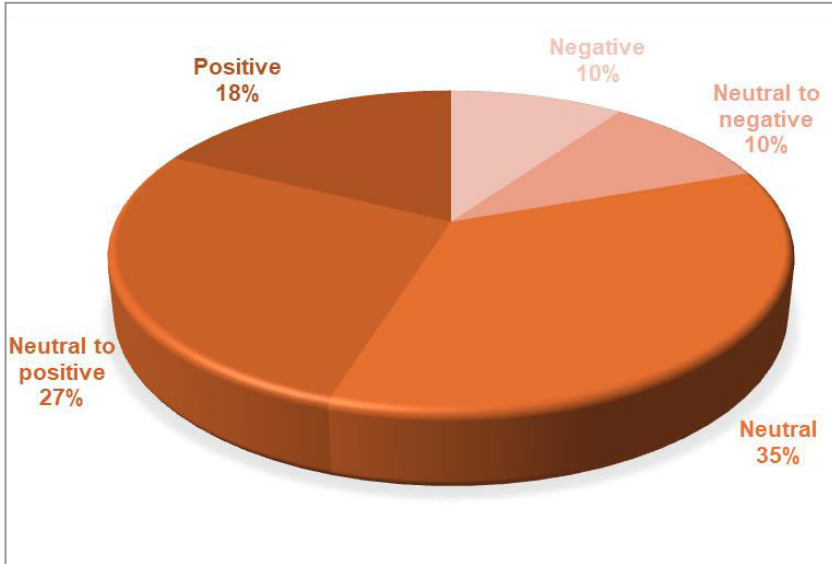


Fig.5. Attitude towards the BRI – overall (2013–2016)

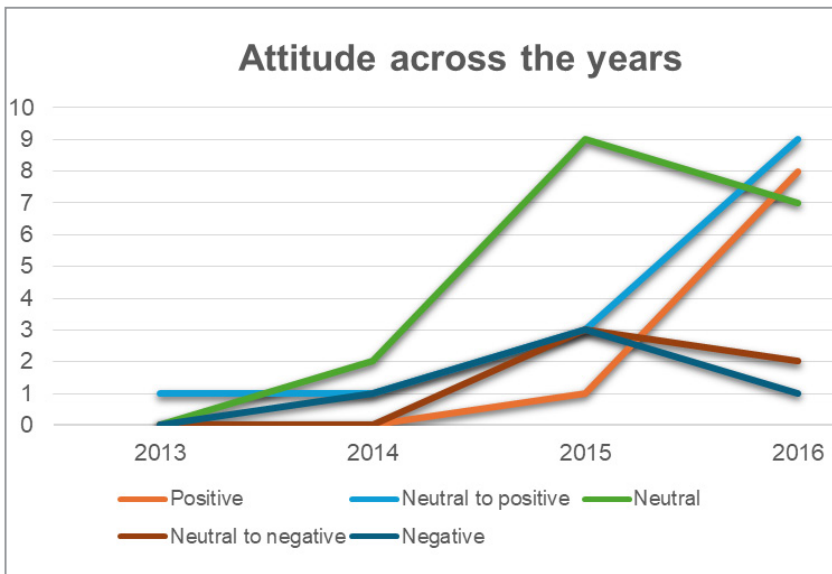


Fig. 6 Attitude towards the BRI across the years

The periodicals became more active in 2015 and there were nine neutral articles followed by three articles in the categories of negative, neutral to negative attitudes. There was also one article reporting on the initiative in a positive manner. Since the highest number of articles was published in 2016, it displays the second most diversified publication year in relation to the attitude categories. The majority of articles presented the BRI in a neutral to positive manner (nine articles) followed by positive (eight articles) and neutral attitudes (seven articles). The lowest number of articles was assigned to neutral to negative category (two articles) and negative category (one article).

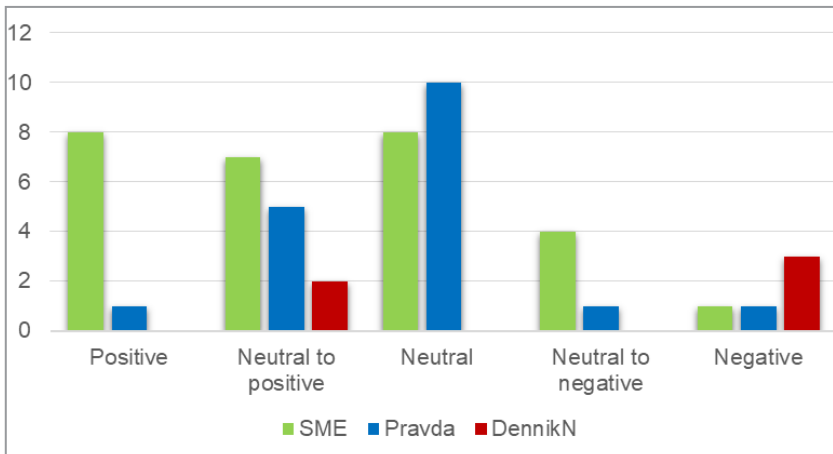


Fig. 7 Attitude towards the BRI

The last figure displays the division of the articles based on the periodical type and attitude categories (see Fig. 7). Considering *SME* as the newspaper with the highest number of articles on the BRI, its attitude mainly revolved around the neutral and positive categories (eight articles respectively) followed by neutral to positive attitude (seven articles), neutral to negative attitude (four articles), and negative attitude (one article). *Pravda* also preferred to depict the initiative in a neutral to positive manner. The highest number of articles was found in the neutral category (10 articles) followed by neutral to positive attitude (five articles). An equal number of articles was assigned to positive, neutral to negative, and negative categories (one article respectively). The least diversified attitudes were shown in the articles published by *Dennik N*. It is also important to note that this newspaper published the lowest number of articles during the period studied and there were only two categories of attitudes: negative (three articles) and neutral to positive (two articles).

Considering the qualitative analysis of the textual data gathered in the corpus, the identified discourse strands can be categorised as follows:

- BRI as modernisation and progress
- BRI as an economic necessity and benefit
- BRI as a geopolitical tool
- Slovakia as an insignificant actor

As for the first category, the BRI is framed as a technologically advanced and efficient way of modernising global trade. The articles depict the initiative as rejuvenated and modernised revival of historical trade routes by making use of metaphors of replacement and progress, such as the substitution of traditional caravans with rail transport (e.g. *camels were replaced by trains*) and the repetitive emphasis of the advancement of the railway gateways. The articles emphasize innovation, interactivity, and efficiency; therefore China can be perceived as a strategic technological and economic partner. On the other hand, political or strategic considerations are omitted, which contributes to a depoliticised understanding of China's infrastructural initiative. As a result, the initiative can be perceived as a natural extension of globalisation rather than a contested geopolitical project.

Regarding the second category, the BRI as economic necessity and benefit, the discourse revolves around the topic of global economic need, which also aligns with the predominance of key subject categories displayed in Fig. 4. The BRI is framed as a pragmatic response to the structural demands of the international trade. The articles depict the BRI as a project that seeks to connect China with the economies of East, South and Central Asia and Europe through the expansion of railways, highways, energy and optical data networks in combination with maritime routes aimed at region of East Asia. The texts foreground to a great extent logistical efficiency, cost and time reduction with regard to creating new transport corridors. The dominance of technocratic language – focusing on containers, transport routes, and commodity flows – constructs trade infrastructure as politically neutral and economically rational. This strand reinforces the perception of China as a functional provider of global connectivity while marginalising questions of power or China's long-term strategic influence spanning continents.

Although the decisive key subject in the third category is also related to the international cooperation and trade, a different viewpoint can be found with regard to global trade initiatives. The BRI is not solely framed as a neutral economic project, and expansive infrastructure plans within the initiative are interpreted as instruments of power and tools for controlling routes, such as *China buying a gateway to Europe in Greece*. This discourse challenges earlier

depoliticised representations by foregrounding the economic dominance of China, thereby exposing the power relations underlying global economic integration.

The last category relates to articles discussing the position of Slovakia as an insignificant actor despite the continuous confirmation of Slovak government officials in deepening the cooperation with China. A shift in the attitude toward a more critical stance of Slovak periodicals is found in multiple articles published in 2016, which indicates that the BRI is being implemented without any significant participation by Slovakia, as indicated by *Slovakia is not China's gateway, China does not perceive Slovakia as a key partner, or China already has two Silk Roads, and they both bypass Slovakia*.

The preliminary analysis revealed that the BRI is framed as a discursively varied concept. A close reading shows that rather than a single dominant narrative, multiple discursive strands coexist. While early coverage tends to present the BRI a depoliticised and innovative initiative supported by economic rationality, articles published toward the end of the studied timeframe also discuss the possible shortcomings of its implementation with regard to the international trade and geopolitical landscape. This shift demonstrates how media discourse evolves in response to national as well as broader international developments.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As shown by the preliminary research findings, this paper provides a basic understanding of the BRI's representation in the chosen Slovak periodicals by combining traditional methods of linguistic research with well-grounded approaches from corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to enhance the process of data management, evaluation, and analysis. The data acquisition and annotation were focused on gathering the publicly available articles published by *Pravda*, *SME*, and *Dennik N* in digital form based on the envisaged search criteria, followed by encoding the metadata for each text file. The pilot dataset was compiled to verify the availability of the textual material retrieved from the chosen periodicals and to test the feasibility of the annotation scheme as well as the selection of variables to determine the extent of the future functionalities, which will be provided in the full version of the *ViewBRI Corpus*. The filtering options were also relevant for the present stage of research since the data analysis not only included the temporal aspect but also the article publication coverage across the periodicals, the key subjects, and attitudes towards the BRI.

Concerning the *year* variable, the highest number of published articles in total was found in 2016, one year after Slovakia officially expressed its interest in joining the initiative. The lowest number of articles was found in 2013 and 2014, which indicates that despite the international launch of the BRI, reporting on the BRI was rather rare. The majority of the articles were published in *SME* followed by *Pravda* and *Dennik N*. A more detailed analysis is required to explore the characteristics of the BRI's image presented by the individual periodicals in addition to the temporal aspect depicted by the article overview, based on the publication year and periodical type. The second variable presented in this paper was the key subject category used for addressing the initiative. The most common areas of the newspapers' interest were linked to economics and cooperation followed by international relations and logistics, mainly repetitive references to the railway connection. The last two categories that were less frequent were geopolitics and infrastructure. The last variable included in the preliminary research was *attitude*. The articles were assigned to one of the five categories on a scale from positive to negative attitudes expressed in relation to the initiative. Due to the relatively limited number of articles published from 2013 to 2016, it is not possible to generalise the overall attitude of the Slovak periodicals towards the initiative. However, preliminary analysis showed the predominance of neutral to positive attitudes instead of strong opposition with regard to the evolving cooperation ties with China in Slovakia.

The qualitative analysis identified four dominant discourse strands in the analysed periodicals: the BRI as modernisation and progress, as economic necessity and benefit, as a geopolitical instrument, and Slovakia as an insignificant actor. The former two categories framed the initiative in predominantly depoliticised terms, emphasizing efficiency, innovation, and global connectivity to depict China as a functional economic partner whereas latter two categories comprise more critical interpretations that highlighted China's economic dominance and the geopolitical implications of its infrastructure investments in various regions, as well as questioning Slovakia's position within the initiative. To summarise, these strands reflect a gradual shift from initial optimism toward a more cautious and critical media discourse surrounding the portrayal of the BRI in the studied periodicals.

By reading the BRI through Slovak eyes as shaped and filtered by media discourse, this paper has shed light on the local perception of the BRI and opens up discussion for further exploration of the role of media in shaping public understanding of national and international cooperation initiatives such as the BRI, and in mediating the position of Slovakia within the evolving relations among China, European Union, and CEE countries as its closest neighbours.

References

- Arduino, Alessandro. 2016. 'China's One Belt One Road: Has the European Union Missed the Train?'. *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University*, pp.1–16.
- Arifon, Olivier, Huang A. Zhao, Yue Zheng, and Anna Z., Melo. 2019. 'Comparing Chinese and European Discourses Regarding to the 'Belt and Road Initiative''. *Revue Française des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication*, 17, pp. 1–24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfsic.6212>
- Brown, Gillian, and George Yule. 1984. *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, Xiangming, Julie T., Miao, and Xue, Li. 2019. 'China-led Globalization? Understanding and Making Policy for Risk in China's Belt and Road Initiative'. *Regions Magazine*, 287(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13673882.2018.00001019>
- China Law Info. 2015. 'Tuidong gongjian Sichou zhi lu jingjidai he 21 shiji haishang Sichou zhi lu de yuanjing yu xingdong推动共建丝绸之路经济带和21世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动' [Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road]. Available at: <http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=144&lib=dbref&Search> (Accessed: 22 April, 2023).
- Cook, Guy. 1989. *Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995a. *Media discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995b. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman.
- Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
- Ge, Yuhan. 2021. 'A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis of "Belt and Road" Initiative in Domestic and Foreign Mainstream Media News Report --- The Case Study of the Xinhua Daily and the Guardian'. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Language, Art and Cultural Exchange (ICLACE 2021), Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 559, pp. 558–566. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210609.111>
- Grieger, Gisela. 2016. 'One Belt, One Road (OBOR): China's Regional Integration Initiative'. *European Parliament*. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586608](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2016)586608) (Accessed: 3 June 2024).
- Hall, Stuart. 1973. *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.
- Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- Herrero, Alicia G., and Jianwei, Xu. 2019. 'Countries' Perceptions of China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Big Data Analysis'. *Bruegel Working Paper*, 1, pp. 1–20.

- Jaklič, Andreja, and Marjan, Svetličič. 2019. 'China and Central and Eastern European Countries within the '16+1': Group or Bilateral Relations?'. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 7(2), pp. 83–100. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15678/EBER.2019.070205>
- Jiang, Yuan. 2022. 'Revealing China's Diplomatic Narratives of the Belt and Road Initiative'. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 22(1), pp. 87–106. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.22005.jia>
- Johnstone, Barbara. 2018. *Discourse Analysis*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kelemen, Barbara, Kristína Kironská, Filip Šebok, Matej Šimalčík, and Richard Turcsányi. 2020. 'Slovakia and China: Challenges to the future of the Relationship.' *Central European Institute of Asian Studies*.
- Kellner, Douglas. 1995. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*. London: Routledge.
- Kironská, Kristina, and Richard, Turcsányi. 2017. 'Slovak policy towards China in the age of Belt and Road Initiative and 16+1 Format'. *China-CEE Institute Working Paper* (2), pp. 1–15.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal, Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
- Li, Hongxiu. 2018. 'Public Diplomacy in the Belt and Road Initiative within the New Media: Theories and Practices'. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, 4(3), pp. 219–236. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajmmc.4-3-4>
- Matura, Tamas. 2018. 'The Belt and Road Initiative Depicted in Hungary and Slovakia'. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 7(2), pp. 174–189. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2018.1537091>
- McEnery, Tony, and Andrew, Hardie. 2012. *Corpus linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511981395>
- Meyer, Charles F. 2002. *English Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511606311>
- Miao, Julie T. 2021. 'Understanding the Soft Power of China's Belt and Road Initiative through a Discourse Analysis in Europe'. *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 8(1), pp. 162–177. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2021.1921612>
- Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic. 2015. 'Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation with the Belt and Road Initiative'. Bratislava.
- Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. 2024. 'Digital News Report 2024'. DOI: [10.60625/risj-vy6n-4v57](https://doi.org/10.60625/risj-vy6n-4v57).
- Šimalčík, Matej. 2021. 'Image of China in Slovakia: Ambivalence, Adoration, and Fake News'. *Asia Europe Journal*, 19(2), pp. 245–258. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-021-00597-4>
- Widdowson, Henry J. 2007. *Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wodak, Ruth, and Michael, Meyer. 2016. *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. 3rd edition London et al.: Sage Publications. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036235192>

- Xi, Jinping 习近平. 2013a. *Hongyang renmin youyi gongchuang meihao weilai* 弘扬人民友谊共创美好未来 [Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future]. (Speech at Nazarbayev University). Available at: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/201309/t20130908_9869126.shtml (Accessed: 8 May, 2022).
- Xi, Jinping. 2013b. Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future. (Speech at Nazarbayev University). Available at: http://hk.ocmfa.gov.cn/eng/jbwzlm/xwdt/wsyw/201309/t20130913_7781669.htm (Accessed: 8 May, 2022).
- Zhang, Li. 2021. 'China's Belt and Road Initiative in the European Media: A Mixed Narrative?', in: Miskimmon, Alister, Ben O'Loughlin, and Jinghan Zeng (eds.) *One Belt, One Road, One Story? Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 115–137. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53153-9_6
- Zhang, Rui. 2023. 'How ASEAN and Western media cover China's Belt and Road Initiative: a case study of representation of the Laos-China railway under international news flows framework'. *Media Asia*, 51(3), pp. 398–419. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2023.2290785>