

WORKING PAPER

Belt and Road Initiative and Platform “17+1”: Perception and Treatment in the Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

The Belt and Road Initiative, as well as cooperation China - Central and Eastern European Countries (hereinafter: CEE) through the Platform "17+1" require the creation of a higher level of awareness of citizens about all aspects of the advantages of these foreign policy initiatives aimed at mutual benefit for both China and the participating countries. Of course, the media always play a key role in providing quality information to the general public, with the aim of better understanding all the benefits that these Chinese initiatives can bring to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, the media can have a great influence on decision makers by creating a positive environment and by accurate and objective information. Therefore, when it comes to media articles related to these topics, it is important to look at the situation objectively and professionally.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the media treatment of the Belt and Road Initiative and Platform "17+1" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, quantitative measuring of the total number of media releases dealing with these topics in the media with editorial board or visible editorial policy, and their qualitative analysis, as well as the analysis of additional, special relevant articles. Additionally, it will try to offer some recommendations with marking desirable actions that need to be implemented in order to improve the perception and treatment of these important Chinese foreign policy initiatives.

Keywords: BRI, China and the CEE countries, Platform "17+1", Platform "16+1", China and BiH, BiH media

Introduction

The People's Republic of China (hereinafter: China) has launched two very important foreign policy initiatives in the past eight years aimed at mutual benefit for both China and the participating countries. Thus, in 2012, "16+1" platform (since 2019, with the accession of Greece to become "17+1") was launched as a mechanism of cooperation with the CEE countries, and cooperation began with the first meeting of prime ministers of participating countries (China Radio International, 2015) in the capital of Poland, Warsaw. A year later, in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative (China Radio International, 2015).

This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and China are marking 25 years of diplomatic relations, and the mutual ties between the two countries are becoming closer, more diverse and more developed. During the years, cooperation between BiH and China has made significant progress. Relations went upward as the reforms in China gave results and, consequently, increased China's foreign policy activity. Bosnia and Herzegovina officially joined the Initiative at the First Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in Beijing, by signing a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Ministers and the Government of the People's Republic of China on cooperation within the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative" (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, 2017). More active participation in the Platform "16+1", Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded since 2015 and a meeting in the Chinese city of Suzhou (Cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European Countries, 2016) .

In order to be able to program further actions regarding cooperation through the two mentioned initiatives, to carry out work to build relationships at a higher level, ie in order to understand in which direction are these relations going, it is necessary to have a basis for further activities. The perception of the general public in both countries will play an important role in shaping these relations in the future. Since the media always play a crucial role in providing quality information to the public, and by creating a positive environment and by accurate and objective information they can have a big impact on decision makers, it is important to objectively examine the current perception of China in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a focus on the Belt and Road Initiative and cooperation platform "17+1".

This paper will try to provide insight into the treatment and perception in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina related to the two mentioned foreign policy initiatives, quantitatively and qualitatively analyzing media coverage, and based on the results give recommendations indicating desirable actions that needs to be taken in terms of improving treatment and perceptions of these important topics.

Analysis of Media Releases

Initial Parameters

Prior to the quantitative research, a method was determined, an assessment of sources that are relevant and can provide a realistic view of the perception of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform "17+1" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the period of observation.

In this research, the search engines were used, i.e., the so-called "search engine" of the media selected as a relevant source, and in situations where it was not possible to perform a search with results that would be sufficiently representative or provide a relevant basis for analysis, Google search engine with targeted search was used (search term site: web name pages).

The basic search phrases were "Pojas i put" (local languages abbreviation for the Belt and Road) and "16+1".¹

The media (their online editions) which can be concluded to have a certain editorial policy, editorial stance and in addition to transmitting news from external sources, they also create their own content, were selected as relevant sources for research.

In order for the research base to be as relevant as possible, ie to give as realistic results as possible, the following factors were taken into account: regional representation (entities), linguistic diversity (Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian), media diversity (agencies, television, daily newspapers and periodicals, news portals).

Taking into account all the above, the following media (ie their online editions) were selected as a base:

- Public news agencies:

Federalna novinska agencija (FENA) and Novinska agencija Republike Srpske (SRNA)

- Members of the Public Broadcasting System:

Radio-televizija Federacije BiH (RTV FBiH) and Radio-televizija Republike Srpske (RTRS)

- Daily newspapers:

Dnevni avaz , Oslobođenje, Nezavisne novine, Glas srpske, Vecernji list (BiH edition), Dnevni list

- Periodicals:

Start BH

- News portals:

¹ Although the platform is, practically, "17+1" since 2019, seven years before that it still had a different name, which is incomparably more represented in the media.

Klix.ba, Bljesak.info.

The survey covered a two-year period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019.

Quantitative analysis

Belt and Road Initiative

A total of 419 releases were recorded during the search through phrases related to the Belt and Road Initiative. Due to different search algorithms and very poor search options by some media selected for the research, and in order to make the results as complete as possible, in addition to the phrase "Pojas i put", other phrases were used such as: pojias i put, Jedan pojias, jedan put, Pojas i put .

Out of total number of releases, 84 of them were assessed as not relevant to the analysis, and it was a situation eg. when one result (release) is repeated, when the release relates to the announcement of the event multiple times in a row, and the like.

335 publications related to the "Belt and Road" Initiative remain to be analysed.

The number of releases by media is shown in Table 1 on Page 31.

Platform "17+1"

A total of 351 releases were recorded during the search through phrases related to the Platform "17+1". Due to different search algorithms and very poor search options by some media selected for the research, and in order to make the results as complete as possible, in addition to the phrase "16+1", other phrases were used such as: 17+1, 16 + jedan, 17 + jedan, 16 plus jedan, 17 plus jedan.

Out of total number of releases, the 69 of them were assessed as not relevant to the analysis, and it was a situation eg. when one result (release) is repeated, when the release relates to the announcement of the event multiple times in a row, and the like.

282 publications related to the Platform "17+1" remain to be analysed.

The number of releases by media is shown in Table 2 on Page 32.

Qualitative analysis

Belt and Road Initiative

Topics. When analyzing, the releases were classified into five categories, according to the topics they cover. The topics were: politics/diplomacy, economics/tourism, education/science, culture and other. Also, it is taken into account that one article can treat more than one topic, and such articles are classified into all categories they have covered.

Related to the topics, the analyzed releases are classified as follows:

- politics/diplomacy - 229

An example of this topic is the title of the release: "The Chinese side paid great importance to developing relations with BiH, considers BiH a good friend and partner in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the past years, guided by the Belt and Road Initiative and 16+1 cooperation, relations between China and BiH have maintained a tendency to develop rapidly." (Klix.ba, 2019)

- economics/tourism - 222

An example of this topic is a paragraph in the release: "Belt and Road" is an initiative launched five years ago by the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping and is built on the ideas of the ancient and medieval "Silk Road", which for centuries connected countries and nations of Asia, Africa and Europe, contributing to the overall progress through the exchange of people, ideas and goods. The modern version of the "Silk Road" has a similar intention, to contribute to the creation of a community of common destiny of humanity through the Belt and Road Initiative and the opening and connection of peoples and states." (Start BH, 2018)

- education/science - 45

An example of this topic is a paragraph in the release: Students in the field of pedagogy and education have the opportunity to visit distant China as part of the summer training program "Belt and Road", organized by Beijing University in Beijing. The goal of the program is to attract as many top talented students as possible to learn and exchange ideas. (Glas Srpske, 2019)

- culture - 55

An example of this topic is a paragraph in the release: "As the charge d'affaires of the Chinese Embassy in BiH Zhou Yang said on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition, the exhibition of Chinese paintings is one in a series of cultural events dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China", which coincides with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and BiH. She reminded that the relations between the two countries in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative and cooperation within the "17 plus one" platform are developing rapidly, emphasizing that good bilateral relations are based on good understanding and cultural exchange." (Nezavisne novine, 2019).

- other - 58

An example of this topic is a paragraph in the release: "The Ambassador confirmed that mutual cultural cooperation is progressing rapidly, and there are numerous good examples within the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as "16+1" within which a festival of winter sports

for students will be held in BiH this year, as well as a conference of ministers of transport and communications." (FENA, 2019) .

The percentage of the topic in the releases is shown in the Chart 1 on Page 37.

Observed individually by the media, the representation of topics in releases is shown in Table 3 on Page 33.

Editorial stand. When analyzing the stand, ie the preference of the release, they were classified into three categories: positive, neutral and negative..

According to the stand, the analyzed releases are classified as follows:

- positive - 234

An example of positive stand is the title of the release: "Great opportunities for the inclusion of the USK in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative" (RTV FBiH, 2018)

- neutral - 49

An example of neutral stand is the title of the release: "Five years of the Belt and Road Initiative - Symposium in the Foreign Trade Chamber of BiH" (Start BH, 2018)

- negative - 49

An example of negative stand is the paragraph in the release: "He further cited China as another destabilizing factor. Palmer reminded that the Chinese authorities are infiltrating the region through the "17+1" and "Belt and Road" initiatives, as well as through investments in strategic industries and information and physical infrastructure, creating new political and economic weaknesses." (Bljesak.info, 2019).

As a percentage, the stand in releases is shown in Chart 2 on Page 38.

Observed individually by the media, the representation of topics in releases is shown in Table 4 on Page 34.

Platform "17+1"

When analyzing, the releases were classified into five categories, according to the topics they cover. The topics were: politics/diplomacy, economics/tourism, education/science, culture and other. Also, it is taken into account that one article can treat more than one topic, and such articles are classified into all categories they have covered.

Related to the topics, the analyzed releases are classified as follows:

- politics/diplomacy - 227

An example of this topic is the paragraph in the release: "Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Bosnia and Herzegovina Chen Bo considers the just concluded 7th summit of heads of government of CEEC and China in Sofia another success of BiH in bilateral cooperation with the People's Republic of China and multilateral within the format of 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe." (Bljesak.info, 2018)

- economics/tourism - 251

An example of this topic is the paragraph in the release: "It was pointed out that economic cooperation between BiH and China has intensified after the launch of the Platform 16+1, that Chinese investors' interest in BiH has increased in recent years, but that there is still much space and opportunities for strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries." (Klix.ba, 2018)

- education/science - 69

An example of this topic is the paragraph in the release: "The goal of opening this institute is to promote Chinese language and culture, strengthen educational cooperation between China and RS, as well as strengthen diplomatic ties and economic cooperation, but also active participation in the Belt and Road Initiative and Platform 16+1 with the aim of better positioning RS in the international framework." (Glas Srpske, 2018)

- culture - 56

An example of this topic is the paragraph in the release: "The third is the bridge of human and cultural exchange. In recent years, the "wave of the Chinese language" has been in full swing in BiH, and art performances such as "Happy Chinese New Year" have been well received by local audience. We will continue to provide big support for teaching Chinese language and promoting Chinese culture in BiH, expanding communications with think tanks, higher education institutions and the media in BiH, in order to increase mutual acquaintance and constantly bring the peoples of the two countries closer." (Klix.ba, 2019)

- other - 75

An example of this topic is the paragraph in the release: "During the Summit in Sofia, BiH proposed to organize the Festival of Winter Sports 16+1 for university students in 2019. I believe that this will help increase the exchange of young people from China and 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, introduce winter sports as a new area of cooperation within 16+1 and strengthen cooperation between China and BiH in winter tourism." (RTV FBiH, 2018).

As a percentage, the stand in releases is shown in Chart 3 on page 39.

Observed individually by the media, the representation of topics in releases is shown in Table 5 on page 35.

Editorial stand. When analyzing the stand, ie the preference of the release, they were classified into three categories: positive, neutral and negative..

According to the stand, the analyzed releases are classified as follows:

- positive - 237

An example of a positive stand is the title: "BiH is the winner of the 16+1 Summit in Sofia" (Bljesak.info, 2018)

- neutral - 31

An example of a neutral stand is the title: Softić at the meeting of the governors of the central banks of the 16+1 countries, China and CEEC (Start BH, 2018)

- negative - 14

An example of a negative stand is the paragraph in the release: "The latest addition to the regional power game is China. All the countries of the Western Balkans, except Kosovo, have been incorporated into the Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, within the 16+1 format. They welcomed much-needed aid, trade and investment flows, which are steadily increasing in areas of economic influence which rivals the European Union. While Beijing supports the region's accession to the European Union, its activities cast doubt within the EU itself that China could use its economic influence to profit politically. In addition, Chinese projects do not necessarily comply with EU sustainability or transparency standards. China's economic reach therefore poses a risk to the region, especially in terms of debt, as much of the investment comes in the form of loans." (Klix.ba, 2019) .

As a percentage, the stand in releases is shown in Chart 4 on Page 40.

Observed individually by the media, the representation of topics in releases is shown in Table 6 on Page 36.

The results

A total of 617 releases addressing both topics were analyzed.

From the above indicators it is possible to gain insight into the topics that dominated the releases, and those are politics/diplomacy (456 releases that dealt with these topics) and economics/tourism (473 releases that dealt with these topics), while all other topics, which is understandable, are still less represented.

When it comes to the editorial stand of analyzed releases, and this is part of the analysis that provides an answer to the question posed by this paper - treatment and perception of the Belt and Road Initiative and Platform "17+1" in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 474 or 76.82% of them were assessed as positive, 80 of them or 12.97% as neutral, and only 63 or 10.21% of them as negative.

Looking at the analyzed topics individually, 335 publications were analyzed for the Belt and Road Initiative. Out of that, 234 or 70.74 % were assessed as positive, and by 49 or 14.63% wer assessed as neutral and negative. For Platform "17+1", 282 releases were

analyzed. Out of that, 237 or 84.04% of them were assessed as positive, 31 or 10.99% of them were assessed as neutral, and only 14 or 4.97 % of them were assessed as negative.

When analyzing the results, it is important to consider that most of the releases that analysis assessed as negative are tied for conveying the stands of political authorities of other countries (Fena, 2019) or for activities that are not related directly to the analyzed topics (Bljesak.info, 2019), while only a small part had the characteristics of a negative stand that relates directly to the attitude of local actors towards the analyzed Chinese foreign policy initiatives and their impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina .

Judging by all the above, it can be concluded that the treatment and perception of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform “17+1” in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are extremely positive.

Additional analysis

In order to obtain a comprehensive insight, in terms of another goal of this work - giving specific recommendations, the additional analysis was performed, ie the analysis of two special cases.

Two releases, which are not covered by quantitative and qualitative analysis, were analyzed more detailed². Both publications are author's, and the authors are well-known and recognized long-term media workers, who have many years of editorial experience in the most respected media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and can be considered relevant in international relations, economic and political situation both globally and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the area of relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and China .

Also, both publications have positive stand toward the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform 17+1, but they are objective presentations with relevant indicators, official data, relevant sources and are avoiding a one-sided view of things.

“JEDAN POJAS – JEDAN PUT”: Kina je spas za BiH

First analyzed release is the one entitled “JEDAN POJAS – JEDAN PUT”: Kina je spas za BiH (Osmović, 2017) . This release covers both of the observed foreign policy initiatives.

Analyzing this release, it can be concluded that the author provides a balanced insight and analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform “17+1”. That can be noted at the outset, from the introductory and accented paragraph, which are indicating possible benefits for

² One publication was not included because it was published outside the observed period and the other one because it was published in a medium that was not selected for analysis.

Bosnia and Herzegovina but also that the things are two-way, ie something also depends on local decision-makers:

The new Chinese strategy called "One Belt, One Road", and it is a new model of globalization, could be a huge investment infusion for BiH, provided of course that the local authorities do their job and accept the salvation belt offered by official Beijing.

In the text, the author also provides data from relevant sources on the economic situation in which Bosnia and Herzegovina finds itself:

Data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) shows the best where BiH is right now - since 2010, foreign investment in our country has been only USD 92 per capita, showing that BiH is at the European bottom.

In addition to the above, the specific moves of the decision-makers of both countries were mentioned, as well as the specific projects in which China plans to invest, with specific figures:

We already know the projects in which the Chinese intend to invest their money - highway Banja Luka - Mlinišće, highway Banja Luka - Novi Grad, then about EUR 500 million in the Thermal Power Plant Gacko, they are also interested in investing in the Hydroelectric Power Plant Buk Bijela and the project "Gornji Horizonti" in Herzegovina. Almost every day the final signing of the contract on the construction of Block 7 in the Tuzla Thermal Power Plant, the value of which is around EUR 800 million, is expected. The Chinese are announcing an investment of USD 305 million for the Banovići Thermal Power Plant, and about EUR 500 million for the Kamengrad Mine and Thermal Power Plant in Sanski Most... Chinese investors built the Stanari Thermal Power Plant near Doboj and it was put into operation last year.

However, the author has made an effort to avoid one-sided view, and uncritically positive representation of matter, where he mentioned that there are disputes about the observed China's foreign policy initiatives (stating most often remarks that it is a geopolitical project exclusively for Chinese interest) and the official response of China to stated:

To the remarks that this is a geopolitical project in the exclusively Chinese interest, the official Beijing replied: "We hope that "One Belt, One Road" is a two-way street, not a one-way street. "China is not only penetrating the world but accepting it and opening up to equal international trade."

And he tried to support the above answer with additional information from official sources:

BiH has a kind of advantage that borders the European Union, but also an advantage in the price of labor, land and raw materials - explained Chinese Ambassador to BiH Chen Bo, emphasizing that her country "has taken numerous measures to place BiH products on the Chinese market". Among other things, in June last year, a permanent BiH booth was opened free of charge at a large investment and trade exhibition held every year in Ningbo, and in the city of Yiwu, which is called the "world of small goods", BiH can also get its permanent booth for free.

In short, the author showed knowledge related to political and economic realities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, knowledge of foreign policy relations, knowledge of relations between the two countries, and with the use of relevant data and official sources tried, with a positive stand, to realistically and objectively point out the benefits of Bosnia and Herzegovina may have from Chinese initiatives as well as what could be obstacles in the process.

Bosna i Hercegovina i Kina: Pojas nade i put spasa

The second analyzed release is the one entitled "Bosna i Hercegovina i Kina: Pojas nade i put spasa" (Borić, 2019). This release covers both of the observed foreign policy initiatives.

By analyzing this release, it can be concluded that the author tries, with a positive stand towards the observed Chinese initiatives, to point out their real feasibility (rapid development of China and large growth of investment in countries participating in the initiatives) and great current significance (both globally - "Belt and Road" and regionally - "17+1"), but maintaining objectivity pointing to the realities related to attracting investment and financing (reduction of investment and financing by "standard" sources of financing, and the opening of new opportunities from China), the most common criticism (potential debt bondage), but also current and potential benefits for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

By underlining the rapid development of China, the author tries to point out the real feasibility of the observed Chinese initiatives:

It is estimated that by 2030, along with the United States and Russia, of the six countries with the largest gross domestic product, four of them could be from Asia, namely China, India, Japan and Indonesia. (...) Last year, the People's Republic of China marked 40 years since the beginning of reforms and opening, the unprecedented development of a country in the modern history. By 2025, China will replace the European

Union as the world's largest gas importer. This year, it sent a space crew to the dark side of the Moon.

A 55-kilometer bridge connecting Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai in Guangdong Province was built. China's GDP in 2018 was Yuan 90,030.9 billion (EUR 11,472.85 billion).

It also underlines their current great importance:

The countries of that initiative recorded a significant increase in imports and exports with China by 13.3 percent, compared to an increase of 7.9 percent with the countries of the European Union, and 5.7 percent with the United States. Last year, Chinese companies made a non-financial direct investment of USD 15.64 billion in 56 countries along the "Belt and Road", which is an increase of 8.9 percent or 13 percent of total Chinese indirect financial investment.

The author also states the realities related to attracting investments by individual countries:

The rapid increase in Chinese investment along the "Belt and Road" can, to some extent, offset the effects of Western capital withdrawals. However, it is common knowledge that many of these countries are not the most attractive investment opportunities, and growing trade protectionism and unilateralism further limit access to finance for developing countries. (...) By the way, Chinese investment along the Belt and Road is concentrated in this area³ and because the developed countries of the West are reluctant to invest in the infrastructure that, as we know in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as those in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Montenegro and the Philippines, is necessary for development

In the part of the text, the most frequently expressed criticism (potential debt bondage) is pointed out, as well as the data that show whether these criticisms are grounded, ie the position that these initiatives are still two-way:

"Belt and Road" has its critics, as well as open enemies. The common concern goes in the direction of the quality of Chinese industry products or financial arrangements through Chinese banks, as dangers threatening debt bondage in the event that certain projects prove unprofitable.

³ In infrastructure.

According to published data, Chinese loans to Africa accounted for only 1.8 percent of Africa's total debt from 2000 to 2016 and are mainly concentrated in infrastructure. (...) Without infrastructure and energy independence, there is no industrial development and these projects require the support of large banks, from the east or west. The fact is that Chinese banks do not condition credit lines on structural reforms in society, as is the fact that the political elites of a country with the help of experts must be able to make decisions with all the consequences they carry.

In the conclusion of the release, the author tried to point out the current and potential benefits that participation in the observed Chinese initiatives could bring to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Eg.:

"Dongfang Electric", which built the Stanard Thermal Power Plant near Dobož and is the chosen partner for the construction of TPP Banovići, is the brightest example of cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative. "Gezhoubu", a company that will soon build block 7 of the thermal power plant in Tuzla with American and European partners, the largest post-war investment project, just waiting to show off its skills, and after the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina gives its final consent to credit indebtedness (by shutting down obsolete blocks, Tuzla will finally breathe, miners relying on the thermal power plant will be provided with a livelihood).

Or:

Infrastructure projects are accompanied by unimagined opportunities for the development of cooperation in tourism. Every year, the number of Chinese people leaving China in search of world destinations grows. Their number in 2018 was 150 million. The share of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the same year with the abolition of the visa regime increased significantly and exceeded 50,000, which is not a single per mille of the total number. But it also shows how much space for improvement there is.

Also, the author, by citing China's attitude towards the process of European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, shows how these initiatives are not conditioned, ie an obstacle to multilateralism :

Senior officials of the People's Republic of China so far expressed support countless times to the path chosen by Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is membership in the European Union, which is, it should be emphasized, China's largest trading partner and whose leaders meet regularly with Chinese leaders, both at the member countries and the EU level.

The volume of mutual exchange between China and the EU in 2012 reached USD 546 billion. The EU invested USD 89.93 billion in China in the same year. The value of goods transported between China and Europe in 2013 reached EUR 393 billion. In 2014, China became the world leader in terms of trade volume - four trillion USD, the volume of trade with the EU is growing with the expectation that in 2020 will reach one trillion USD.

In short, the author showed great knowledge related to political and economic realities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, knowledge of global economic and political relations, knowledge of relations between the two countries, and he, as well as the author of the first analyzed release, with using relevant data and official sources, and with a positive stand, tried to realistically and objectively point out the benefits that Bosnia and Herzegovina can have from Chinese initiatives as well as what could be obstacles in the process.

Other sources

In addition to the conducted analysis, for an overall insight into the treatment and perception of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform “17+1”, it is necessary to list other sources that speak about the analyzed topics. Namely, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are other sources besides the classic media. We can divide them into two groups: governmental and non-governmental.

Governmental sources include:

- Website of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Bosnia and Herzegovina - <http://ba.chineseembassy.org/ba/>

- website of the Confucius Institute of the University of Sarajevo - <http://www.confucius.unsa.ba/>

- Facebook profile of the Confucius Institute of the University of Sarajevo - <https://www.facebook.com/Konfucijev-institut-Univerziteta-U-Sarajevo-1212031732172115/>

- website of the Confucius Institute of the University of Banja Luka - <https://www.ki.unibl.org/>

- Facebook profile of the Confucius Institute of the University of Banja Luka - <https://www.facebook.com/kiunibl.org/>

- Facebook profile of the Department of Sinology at Faculty of Philosophy of the University of East Sarajevo - <https://www.facebook.com/katedrazasinologiju/>

Non-governmental sources include:

- website of the Association "Bosnian-Chinese Friendship" - www.boskin.ba
 - Facebook profile of the Association "Bosnian-Chinese Friendship" - <https://www.facebook.com/boskin.ba/>
 - web (news) portal of the Association "Bosnian-Chinese Friendship" - www.kinadanas.com
 - Facebook profile of the web (news) portal of the Association "Bosnian-Chinese Friendship" - <https://www.facebook.com/kinadanas/>
 - website of the Foundation for the Promotion and Development of the Belt and Road Initiative - www.pojasiput.ba
 - Facebook profile of the Foundation for the Promotion and Development of the Belt and Road Initiative - <https://www.facebook.com/pojasiput/>
- These sources, by their nature, have an expected positive stand towards the analyzed topics.

Concluding remarks

Judging from the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis, which can be further confirmed with analysis of two separate releases, it can be concluded that the treatment and perception of the Belt and Road Initiative and Platform "17+1" in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely positive. If we take into account the great geographical distance between the two countries, that Bosnia and Herzegovina is traditionally oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration, that the public in Bosnia and Herzegovina has practically recently become acquainted with China in general and then with the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform "17+1", in which the cooperation between the two countries has passed (and in some segments is still passing) the phase of initial difficulties, the perception of the observed initiatives in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be assessed even more positive.

Given this favorable perception in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which always play a key role in providing quality information to the general public, in creating a positive environment, and can have a great impact on decision makers, the conclusion is that this result could be greatly exploited to build the foundation for creating the direction of further bilateral relations, "programming" of mutual actions on the issue of improving cooperation through the two mentioned initiatives, and finally to build relations at the highest possible level.

Recommendations for further action

Although the survey gave a positive result regarding the treatment and perception of observed topics, given the volatility in global relations, as well as various line of force in regional and local political and economic relations which can contribute to lowering the lower level of bilateral relations between China and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and weakening positions of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Belt and Road Initiative and the Platform "17+1", it is necessary to constantly undertake activities to maintain, and if possible to improve, current positive treatment and perception of these Chinese initiatives for international cooperation.

The basic recommendation is general when it comes to informing the general public - to continue to access the media transparently and up-to-date, and with comprehensive and understandable language, on the basis of which the media can then create an stand to act in all future situations.

And from this analysis, research, it was possible to see how information, education of media workers on the topic they cover is very important when it comes to how to present that topic. The more they know about the topic being reported on, the better, more objective and topical the articles/releases are, devoid of prejudices and reflections of external influences. Related to this, it is desirable to establish new channels of cooperation and strengthen the existing in terms of permanent contact with media workers, their education/information on important topics - briefings, visits to cultural institutions (Confucius Institute, etc.), visiting construction sites/plants of Chinese enterprises in BiH, visits and participation at events (Chinese New year, the celebration of certain holidays, etc.), and also organizing personal introductions (study visits, etc.) to the observed foreign policy initiatives and with China in general .

Also, it is necessary to take into account the fact that for average resident of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and consequently for the majority of the media, China is still "far away at the end of the world" and the stand of most people about everything that comes from this country is based on certain prejudices, half-information or information that they cannot easily decode because they do not have access to a sufficient amount of comprehensive information to enable them to do so, stands they hear from the media the most of which have not treated China at all until a few years ago. Therefore, the approach to the media, but also to the wider public in general, it is necessary to be created in a comprehensive manner - not just in relation to the two observed foreign policy initiatives than for China in general - people, language, sport, heritage, art, etc.

Regardless of possible objections and bias, the bias of these sources of information, it is necessary to continue to help maintain other sources of information in addition to the classic media - existing governmental and non-governmental sources.⁴

Help encourage/maintain/improve some, selected non-governmental sources of information. Chinese state media do not have a page for Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are sites/programmes of China Radio International in Croatian and Serbian language that focus on Croatia and Serbia, but there is not a site that focuses on Bosnia and Herzegovina (and there is no content in Bosnian language). Related to that, it is desirable to consider the opening of such a channel/program of this or any other media, or what is realistic and feasible fast – to establish cooperation and encourage and support the development/operation of some of non-governmental sources of information . Eg. to help development of the most vital non-governmental source of information about China, and only one referred to the daily transfer of news, the first Chinese online magazine in the languages of South Slavic peoples, the web (news) portal Kina danas – Kineski vijesnik⁵ in order to reach the level where it can be able/capacitated to publish a certain number of news, eg. sites/programmes of China Radio International in Croatian and Serbian language, and to add a certain number of "its own" news and have all that news in Croatian and Serbian and Bosnian language. This is just one example, and cooperation is possible to establish in many ways, although it is necessary to bear in mind that it depends on the cooperation opportunities possessed by the Chinese state media and the local legislations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁴ Listed in the section Other sources, pages 21-22.

⁵ www.kina-danas.com - Listed in the section Other sources, page 22.

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Tables and charts

Table 1.

Belt and Road Initiative, Search Results

Media	Total	Irrelevant	For analysis
FENA	86	25	61
SRNA	17	3	14
RTVFBiH	76	35	41
RTRS	22		22
Dnevni avaz	28	4	24
Oslobođenje	21		21
Nezavisne novine	43	9	34
Glas Srpske	25	3	22
Večernji list (BiH)	14	2	12
Dnevni list	10	1	9
Start BH	12	2	10
Klix.ba	35		35
Bljesak.info	30		30
TOTAL	419	84	335

Table 2.*Platform „17+1“, Search Results*

Media	Total	Irrelevant	For analysis
FENA	86	25	61
SRNA	17	3	14
RTVFBiH	76	35	41
RTRS	22		22
Dnevni avaz	28	4	24
Oslobođenje	21		21
Nezavisne novine	43	9	34
Glas Srpske	25	3	22
Večernji list (BiH)	14	2	12
Dnevni list	10	1	9
Start BH	12	2	10
Klix.ba	35		35
Bljesak.info	30		30
TOTAL	351	69	282

Table 3.*Belt and Road Initiative, Representation of Topics in Analyzed Media Releases*

Media	Politics/ diplomacy	Economics/ tourism	Education/ science	Culture	Other
FENA	44	44	5	13	10
SRNA	10	12	5	6	4
RTVFBiH	27	20		2	7
RTRS	20	10	4	5	4
Dnevni avaz	20	17	1	1	2
Oslobođenje	15	15	5	5	3
Nezavisne novine	18	21	2	2	2
Glas Srpske	11	8	4	4	1
Večernji list (BiH)	6	9	1		
Dnevni list	7	6	1	2	3
Start BH	7	9	2	2	2
Klix.ba	24	30	9	10	9
Bljesak.info	20	21	6	3	11
TOTAL	229	222	45	55	58

Table 4.*Belt and Road Initiative, The Stand of Analyzed Media Releases*

Media	Positive	Neutral	Negative
FENA	38	17	6
SRNA	11	1	
RTVFBiH	24	6	11
RTRS	20		2
Dnevni avaz	16	2	5
Oslobođenje	15	1	5
Nezavisne novine	24	8	2
Glas Srpske	16	3	3
Večernji list (BiH)	11	1	
Dnevni list	4	1	4
Start BH	9	1	
Klix.ba	28	4	3
Bljesak.info	18	4	8
TOTAL	234	49	49

Table 5.*Platform „17+1“, Representation of Topics in Analyzed Media Releases*

Media	Politics/ diplomacy	Economics/ tourism	Education/ science	Culture	Other
FENA	45	62	13	5	15
SRNA	8	12	4	4	5
RTVFBiH	17	17	6	5	4
RTRS	25	21	7	5	6
Dnevni avaz	13	15	6	2	4
Oslobođenje	15	16	5	5	5
Nezavisne novine	21	21	5	6	4
Glas Srpske	7	6		1	1
Večernji list (BiH)	12	14	5	2	6
Dnevni list	12	12	2	7	4
Start BH	3	3	1	1	
Klix.ba	40	42	11	10	16
Bljesak.info	9	10	4	3	5
TOTAL	227	251	69	56	75

Table 6.*Platform „17+1“, The Stand of Analyzed Media Releases*

Media	Positive	Neutral	Negative
FENA	60	13	2
SRNA	11	1	
RTVFBiH	18		1
RTRS	17	4	4
Dnevni avaz	15	1	1
Oslobođenje	14	2	
Nezavisne novine	21	1	1
Glas Srpske	6	1	
Večernji list (BiH)	13	1	
Dnevni list	13		
Start BH	3		
Klix.ba	37	5	4
Bljesak.info	9	2	1
TOTAL	237	31	14

Chart 1.

Belt and Road Initiative, Representation of Topics in Analyzed Media Releases

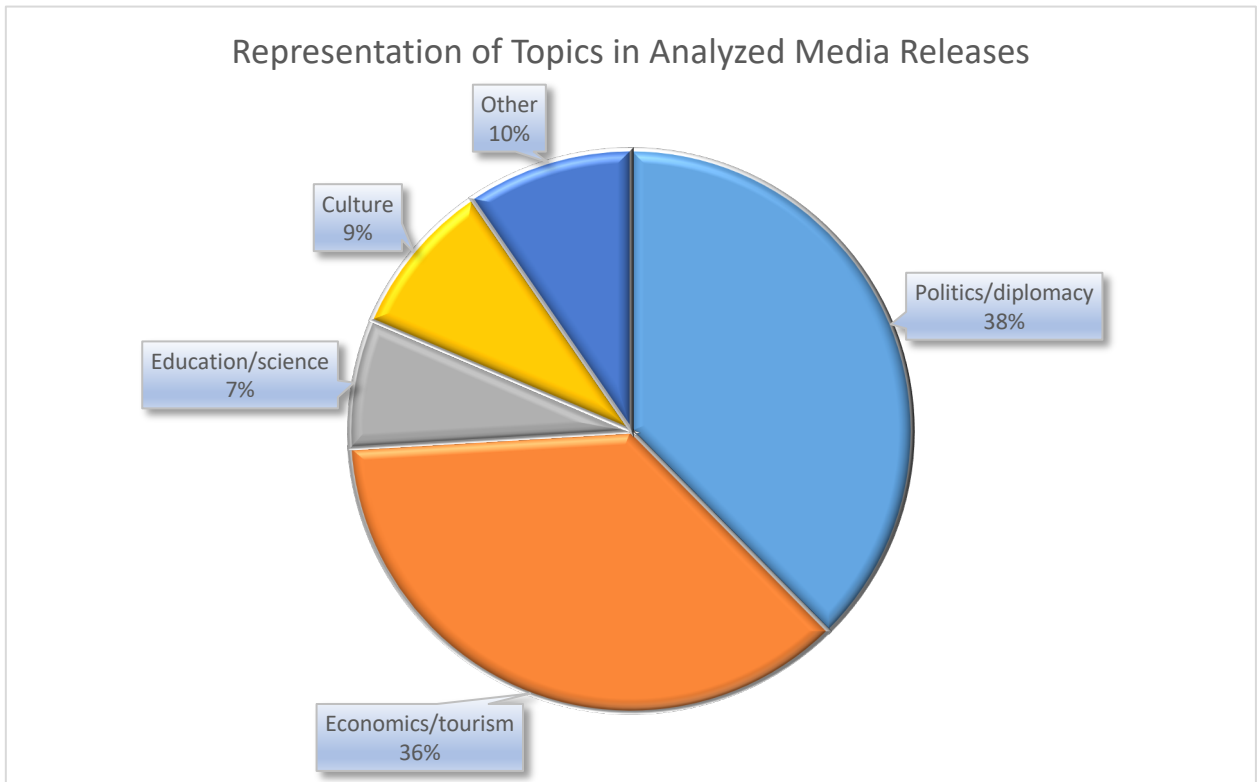


Chart 2.

Belt and Road Initiative, The Stand of Analyzed Media Releases

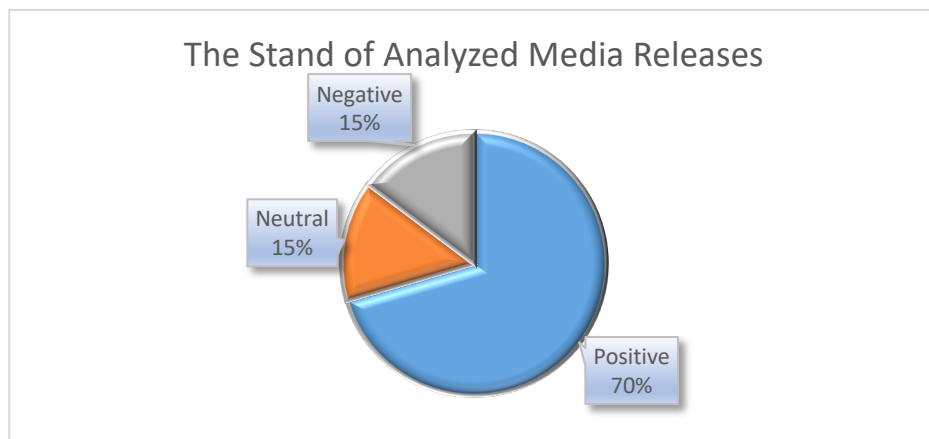


Chart 3.

Platform „17+1“, Representation of Topics in Analyzed Media Releases

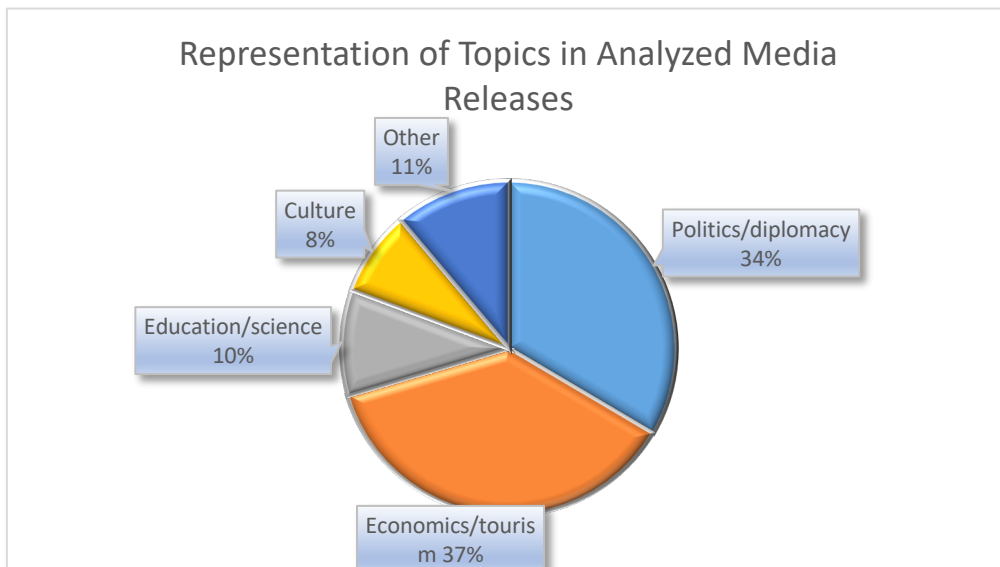


Chart 4.

Platform „17+1“, The Stand of Analyzed Media Releases

