

Indian News Media Versus the Belt and Road Initiative: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a Chinese geopolitical initiative, has attracted global attention. The BRI has a significant impact on international commerce, regional politics, and global dynamics, with India occupying a central position in the initiative's strategic objectives and economic prospects. This study examines the representation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Indian news media. This image is significant for its reflection of the public and government perception of the initiative,

which in turn informs India's response and policy towards this significant international development. This research employs corpus-based critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine a diverse array of articles from prominent Indian newspapers and digital news outlets. This method is empirical in its study of media language, themes, and narratives, providing numerical results on the frequency or occurrence of specific language as well as pattern variations pertaining to discourse. Additionally, it offers qualitative insights regarding the situation and impact of the language in question. The

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research findings indicate that the Indian news media plays a significant role in shaping the discourse surrounding the BRI.

Keywords: Media; BRI; CPEC; Corpus-based critical discourse analysis.

Los medios de comunicación indios frente a la Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta: un análisis crítico del discurso basado en corpus

RESUMEN

La Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta (BRI), un proyecto geopolítico de China, ha atraído la atención mundial. La BRI tiene un impacto significativo en el comercio internacional, la política regional y la dinámica global, y la India ocupa una posición central en los objetivos estratégicos y las perspectivas económicas de esta. Este estudio examina la representación de la Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta (BRI) en los medios de comunicación indios. Esta imagen es importante porque refleja la percepción pública y gubernamental de la iniciativa, que a su vez informa la respuesta y la política de la India hacia este importante proyecto internacional. Esta investigación emplea el análisis crítico del discurso (CDA) basado en corpus para examinar una variedad diversa de artículos destacados de periódicos y medios de comunicación digitales indios. Este método es empírico en su estudio del lenguaje,

los temas y las narrativas de los medios, y proporciona resultados numéricos sobre la frecuencia o la aparición de un lenguaje específico, así como variaciones de patrones relacionados con el discurso. Además, ofrece información cualitativa sobre la situación y el impacto del lenguaje en cuestión. Los hallazgos de la investigación indican que los medios de comunicación indios desempeñan un papel importante en la configuración del discurso en torno a la BRI.

Palabras clave: medios de comunicación; BRI; CPEC; análisis crítico del discurso basado en corpus.

INTRODUCTION

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a significant geopolitical and economic undertaking spearheaded by China, is transforming the global trade landscape and influencing diplomatic discourse between nations. As a new Silk Road, it boldly plans to establish novel avenues for interconnectivity and collaboration across diverse global regions (Srisamoot, 2024). This plan has gained considerable traction, prompting a range of responses from countries across the globe. As a result, it is subject to close scrutiny and debate. India's perspective is particularly noteworthy. As a significant actor in this region, India's stance on the BRI reflects a nuanced approach to strategic considerations, financial considerations, and an awareness of the role of political power dynamics. This study examines the manner in which the Indian news media portrays

the BRI, which is of significant importance in illustrating the country's response to this significant global transformation.

The Indian media is replete with a diverse array of vibrant content, including a multitude of narratives. This makes it an appropriate topic for an investigation of the alignment between discussions on the national news and India's perceptions of other countries beyond its borders. This study employs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the multifaceted discourse surrounding the BRI in India and its broader implications for Sino-Indian relations and the politics of the region.

Since its inception in 2013, the BRI has constituted a pivotal element of China's foreign policy apparatus, serving as a primary instrument for navigating the country's diplomatic engagements with other nations (Schulhof *et al.*, 2022). The objective is to enhance regional connectivity through the construction of additional infrastructure, including roads, railways, and maritime routes. This is a comprehensive plan that encompasses a vast geographical area, extending from East Asia to Europe and Africa (Finabel, 2021). The initiative has been lauded for its potential to stimulate economic growth and development. However, concerns have been raised about the potential for debt-financed infrastructure projects to serve as a means of exerting control over other countries or regions. This raises the possibility of China becoming overly influential in certain areas, which could give rise to strategic challenges. For India, the BRI represents a multifaceted

challenge in their interactions with other nations, necessitating a sophisticated strategy for its navigation. India's response to the BRI is informed by a multitude of factors, including historical relations with China, concerns about regional security, and aspirations to emerge as a prominent global leader. The Indian government has exercised caution in its assessment of the BRI, particularly with regard to initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This is due to the fact that the route traverses territories that both India and Pakistan claim as their own (Rehman *et al.*, 2023). The media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and national perspectives on major global developments, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In India, a country with a robust and transparent media landscape, the influence of the press is particularly pronounced. It demonstrates the diversity of perspectives and approaches within the nation, and also influences how they engage with other countries.

Prior research has demonstrated the role of the media in shaping global relationships, particularly in influencing discourse surrounding global policy issues and events. However, there is a gap in the existing literature regarding the precise manner in which the BRI is structured when viewed through the lens of CDA in the context of India. This research aims to address this gap in the literature by examining how Indian news outlets discuss the BRI, the narratives and ideas they employ, and the potential impact of these discourses on India's foreign policy.

The methodology employed in this study is CDA (Fotiadou, 2022), a tool designed for a detailed examination of the nuances of media discourse. CDA enables a detailed examination of the language employed in news stories, editorials, and other forms of discourse. This allows for a comprehensive examination of the ways in which issues are constructed and meanings are constructed.

The corpus for this research comprises articles from a range of Indian newspapers and online news outlets, selected to represent a diverse spectrum of political ideologies and editorial perspectives. This approach allows for a comprehensive and objective examination of the media landscape. Additionally, it examines the alignment between these narratives and India's

broader foreign policy objectives and the sentiments of its citizenry. In light of the findings of this study, it is proposed that the discourse of Indian news media with regard to the BRI is characterised by the coexistence of strategic narratives and economic, as well as idea-based, stories. Such narratives demonstrate that India exercises caution and strategic planning in its engagement with the BRI, and they also have a significant impact on public opinion. Consequently, this has an impact on India's decisions regarding foreign affairs. The objective of this study is to provide a detailed analysis of these narratives, thereby enhancing our understanding of India's perspective on the BRI and its implications

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW ON INDIAN NEWS MEDIA VERSUS THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

No.	Author(s)	Year	Area	Method	Findings
1	Muhammad Afzaal, Kaibao Hu, Muhammad Ilyas Chishti, Zahid Khan	2019	Pakistan	Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis	Pakistani newspapers generally present China positively, with themes of "brotherhood" and an "iron bond" in the China-Pakistan relationship.
2	Tariq H. Malik	2020	China, the United States, Europe, Pakistan	Rhetorical theory	US's political logic diverges from the BRI project's approach, while European economic logic shows more alignment with the SRI.
3	Hai Yang and Baldwin Van Gorp	2023	China, India, the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Australia	Cultural Framing and Content Analysis	Notable difference between the perspectives of Chinese officials and foreign political-media elites.
4	Lejin Zhang, Doreen Wu	2020	China and the United Kingdom	Critical Discourse Analysis with Corpus-assisted Methods	China Daily and other mainstream Chinese media emphasize positive attributes of the BRI, while Financial Times presents a mixed and conflicting image of China.
5	Rui Zhang	2023	ASEAN countries and Western countries	Quantitative Analysis	Highlights both continuities and changes in international news flows.

No.	Author(s)	Year	Area	Method	Findings
6	Zhou Li	2022	India and China	McGee's ideograph theory (1980) and Entman's framing theory (1993)	The TOI promotes a specific "Indian" understanding of the BRI through its strategic use of the ideograph "territorial sovereignty."
7	Julie T. Miao	2021	European Countries	Media Discourse Analysis	Regional diversity in media coverage of China's SRI in Europe.
8	Gulshan Sachdeva	2018	India and the Indian Ocean Region	Qualitative Analytical Approach	India's perceptions of the SRI are influenced by broader India-China relations and extend beyond official narratives.

for regional transformations and the evolving relationship between India and China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their 2019 study, Afzaal et al. employ corpus-based critical discourse analysis to examine the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani press coverage. Additionally, Pakistani newspapers have consistently portrayed China in a positive light, emphasizing the theme of "brotherhood" and characterizing relations with China as an "ironic bond." This aligns with a pervasive narrative in which friendly ties are portrayed in a favorable light in media coverage. Moreover, the paper elucidates how these discourses facilitate the construction of an ideological representation of China's BRI project, including CPEC. While the portrayal is predominantly positive, the authors also observe that the media lexicon exhibits complexities and sensitivities with regard to matters pertaining to BRI and CPEC. Therefore, the pervasive positivity of the discourse indicates that within the Pakistani media landscape, there exist nuanced perspectives and potential concerns

regarding these initiatives. In 2020, Tariq H. Malik presented a discussion on the BRI, including an analysis of its acceptance by countries around the globe. This illustrates the disparate perceptions of the BRI held by its proponents and detractors. Those who oppose the initiative, primarily as a result of American inattention and resistance, perceive it as a source of challenges rather than opportunities. Conversely, those who support the BRI are encouraged by global attention and perceive more opportunities than difficulties, given the concept of legitimacy is taken for granted. This article employs rhetorical theory to examine the disparate perspectives on the BRI. In the official Chinese report from 2019, comments from American and European media outlets, as well as the United States' direct response to its 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy, were gathered. The results contribute to a better understanding of the process of legitimizing such international projects and provide insights into the impact of rhetorical theory on world policies. This article elucidates the disparate perspectives and narratives surrounding the BRI, particularly

in light of the varying regional interests at stake. In their 2023 study, Yang and Baldwin provide a comprehensive overview of the global discourse surrounding China's BRI. The authors employ a cultural framing and content analysis approach to examine a bespoke corpus comprising communications pertaining to the BRI. Following the identification of these frames, the authors proceed with a deductive analysis, which illuminates the key assertions that serve to legitimize China's discourse on the BRI. This analysis demonstrates the significant discrepancies in perspectives between Chinese officials and foreign political-media elites. Furthermore, it addresses the persistence of a specific stance or shifts in stance by foreign governments regarding BRI, along with the rationale behind their stances. The study also indicates that foreign elite media is increasingly critical of BRI. In general, this article demonstrates a comprehensive and multidimensional perspective on the BRI debate, emphasizing that cultural and interpretive differences shape how people from diverse global contexts perceive China's geopolitical initiative.

In their 2020 study, Lejin Zhang and Doreen Wu employ a combination of critical discourse analysis and corpus-assisted procedures to investigate the representation of the BRI in Chinese and English language newspapers in China and the UK. The study focused on journalistic reports in China Daily and the Financial Times published between March 2015 and March 2016. The results demonstrate that mainstream Chinese media outlets, such as

China Daily, tend to prioritize the positive aspects of the initiative. They portray China as a peace-loving, cooperative entity on the path to becoming a dominant global economic power. China is perceived as a significant player in the global economy, yet it is also depicted as an authoritarian state with the military capacity to impede and pose geopolitical threats. In the 2023 study, Rui Zhang examines the media representation of a significant infrastructure project in Laos, situated within the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This study presents a comprehensive analysis of 137 news stories from 42 outlets in seven ASEAN countries and seven Western countries. The research is situated within the broader international context of news flows, examining key aspects such as agenda-setting, framing, and the distribution of news sources. The study's principal findings indicate that there are both continuities and changes in the patterns of international news flows. On the one hand, a study asserts that these news flows persist in their unidirectional nature, predominantly emanating from the central regions of the global system and cascading into semi-peripheral areas and peripheries. Conversely, this research identifies significant shifts in the landscape of international news flows.

In her article published in 2022, Zhou Li focuses on how the Times of India presents China's BRI. In her analysis, Li draws upon the 1980 concept of ideographs as presented by McGee and the framing theory put forth by Entman in 1993. She employs these concepts to examine how a significant

media platform, the Times of India (TOI), shapes public opinion on international and domestic issues through its reporting. The study focuses on the application of a specific ideograph, “territorial sovereignty,” in the context of Times of India’s coverage, which represents a distinctly Indian perspective on the BRI. Furthermore, the research presents a historical overview of the principles and implications associated with the concept of “territorial sovereignty” as an ideograph, thereby establishing a robust foundation for a more comprehensive examination of its interpretation within the context of TOI. Li provides a comprehensive examination of 40 TOI articles, employing a synchronic structure to elucidate the ideograph’s interconnections and surrounding narratives. This approach demonstrates how elite media outlets employ strategic language and framing to influence public understanding of significant international issues such as the BRI, illustrating the nexus between media and politics in the field of international relations. In her 2021 study, Julie T. Miao examines how European countries perceive China’s growing global influence, particularly in the context of their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) programs. This report employs a media discourse analysis to identify the variability in local reporting of BRI. This diversity can be attributed to the varying roles that countries assume in discourse: they may act as discourse leaders, responders, or followers. It is evident that there are considerable discrepancies in the perceptions of European countries regarding the potential impact of BRI and China’s

involvement on global political affairs. It is notable that the leaders of the European Union have undergone a shift in perspective, moving from an optimistic stance to a more conservative one. The lack of clarity surrounding China’s use of soft power to promote the BRI in Europe may be a significant factor contributing to the program’s limited success, as proposed in this article.

In this regard, the article written by Gulshan Sachdeva (2018) provides a comprehensive examination of India’s evolving perspectives on the BRI initiated by China. The article elucidates that India’s perspective on the BRI is not solely contingent on the government’s official stance but is also shaped by the broader bilateral relationship with China. Notable concerns pertain to the sovereignty implications of the CPEC and the geopolitical ramifications in the Indian Ocean Region, which have diverted attention from other facets of the BRI. The article shifts its focus from geopolitical and developmental perspectives to a political economy approach, examining the involvement of countries in BRI from a political economy standpoint. The article underscores the mounting challenges confronting BRI projects, notably the risk of debt traps, allegations of corruption, political scandals, and adverse environmental consequences, along with skepticism about their long-term viability. India is demonstrating a notable degree of interest in these matters, which may indicate that the country’s authorities are adopting a cautious and critical stance towards the BRI initiative. Extensive studies have been conducted on the BRI and

its global impact, yet there is a noticeable absence of focused research on how Indian news media influences public opinion and governmental perception of such effects within CDA. The majority of extant studies adopt either a qualitative or a quantitative approach, but few employ an integrated methodology that incorporates both in the study of media discourses on the BRI. This study aims to address this gap by adopting a comprehensive approach to the language, themes, and narratives surrounding Indian news media with regard to reporting on BRI.

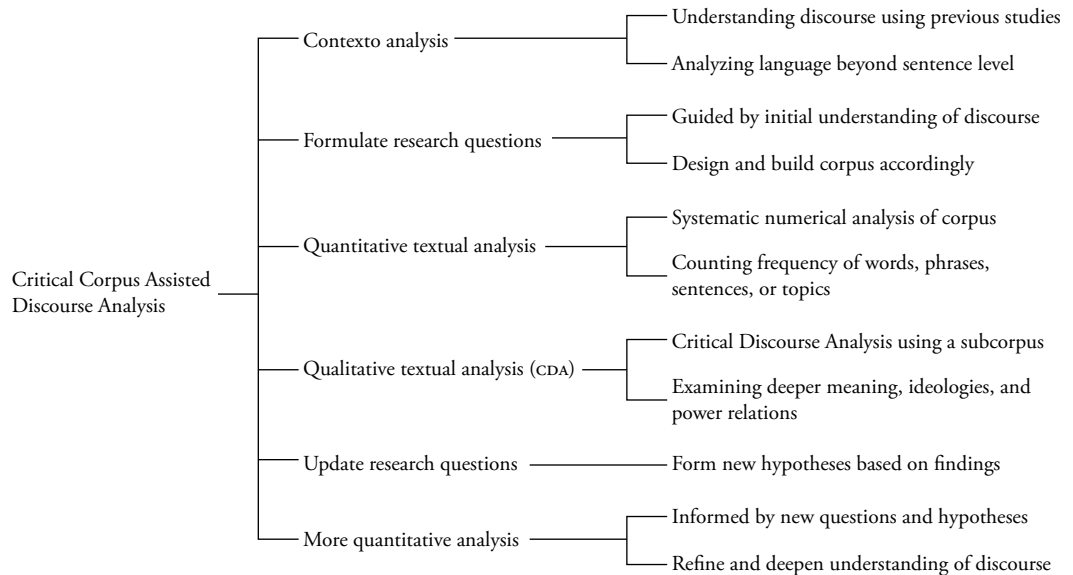
METHODOLOGY

This research employs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the discursive practices of Indian news outlets with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The rationale for employing CDA is that it effectively illuminates the fundamental concepts and power dynamics that are often obscured within textual discourse. CDA is an effective method for discerning how language is employed to construct perspectives, shape perceptions of individuals or groups, and influence public opinion (Li *et al.*, 2023). This makes it an optimal method for examining media discourse on complex geopolitical issues such as the BRI. The research design is structured to address several key questions. What is the nature of the coverage of the BRI in Indian news outlets? What are the primary concepts and narratives present in this account? The objective is to ascertain how these narratives reflect or influence India's foreign policy and public

opinion. To address these inquiries, the research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

The CDA is an appropriate source for our study, as it will facilitate a comprehensive and detailed analysis (figure 1). The corpus comprises a multitude of articles, comments, and opinion pieces from a variety of newsgroups in India. The selection criteria are based on a number of factors. The group's content encompasses both print and digital news from across India, including local newspapers and major online news outlets. This combination ensures the presentation of a diverse range of perspectives and reaches a significant proportion of the Indian population. The news sources in India encompass a diverse array of political and ideological perspectives. To ensure the integrity of the review, we utilize a comprehensive range of information from diverse perspectives. This entails incorporating perspectives that espouse left-wing or right-wing ideologies, as well as those that endorse or challenge governmental actions. India's linguistic and cultural diversity is reflected in its media landscape. The primary focus is on English-language media, which has the capacity to reach and influence the entire country. However, sources in other Indian languages are also consulted to gain insights from diverse geographical regions. The research employs a temporal approach to facilitate a rapid examination of the manner in which the media addressed a pivotal aspect of India-China relations and the BRI growth initiative.

FIGURE 1. CDA



Data collection means obtaining articles from selected news sources over a period of time. This is facilitated by digital records, media libraries and news gathering platforms. We select articles about the BRI to ensure that they focus mainly on this initiative and its various parts. We use both computer searches using keywords (such as “Belt and Road Initiative” and “China-India relations”) and manual review to ensure that we select relevant and high-quality content that meets the required criteria. Once collected, the data is converted into digital form (if it is not already there) and organised into a well-structured database. This data collection forms the basis of our study and is used for both types of analysis, qualitative and quantitative.

CDA plays a key role in the way this study is set up. The CDA method of language

study is used to look at how the Indian news media talk about the BRI and whether they show or make social things real. The power of CDA lies in its ability to link the small details of language use to big things like social systems and beliefs. The application of CDA in this research involves several key steps:

- Textual Analysis (Li *et al.*, 2023): This means looking carefully at the language of the media for things like word choice, sentence structure, comparisons and persuasion. The aim is to find out how these parts help to shape the BRI, show what China is like and present India’s position.
- Discursive Practices (Yang and Wang, 2023): This part looks at how texts are produced, delivered and used. It

examines how news stories are shaped by reportage methods, political rules and wider societal effects.

- **Socio-Cultural Analysis:** Here the focus shifts to learning about the wider social and cultural meanings of media stories. This means looking at how the stories fit in with or challenge current social ideas, what people think is important and who is in control. This is most often the case when talking about India-China relations and regional politics.
- **Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality (Almaghlouth, 2022):** This part of the CDA looks at how media texts use or talk about other texts or types of texts. It's very important for us to know how the BRI discussion in the Indian media relates to other key discussions, such as how to stay safe as a nation, how to grow our economy, and how to deal with countries around the world.

While the CDA provides a strong structure for looking at media conversations, it's important to recognize its weaknesses. One of the main weaknesses of CDA, as with the qualitative method, is the potential for personal views to come into play in understanding texts.

The rationale for selecting both English and Hindi newspapers can be understood by focusing on the following key aspects: Although English and Hindi are the two official languages of India, the country has a wide range of languages. English-language newspapers such as *The Times of*

India and The Hindu tend to target well-educated urbanites who are also politically engaged and have a broad awareness of foreign and economic policy. Hindi dailies such as *Dainik Jagran* cater to rural and semi-urban readers who may have different views on foreign policy projects such as the BRI.

Reflecting the views of India's most influential leaders, many of India's English-language media tend to have a more global perspective. Conversely, Hindi newspapers are known for publishing articles that reflect the opinions and priorities of the general population. This difference in readership means that multilingual publications sometimes offer different perspectives on global issues such as the BRI. Hindi media, for example, might emphasise regional or nationalist ideas, while English publications might offer more critical or sophisticated views. Including both helps to provide a full picture of the acceptance of the BRI across the spectrum. Ultimately, the choice of English and Hindi newspapers should help to explain the diversity of government and public views on the BRI. By combining the two language streams, which reflect elite and popular opinion respectively, it is possible to understand how media representations of the issue influence policy-making and strategic responses in India.

The study's focus on a specific period of time suggests that its findings may not show how the media have portrayed the BRI over a longer period of time. Stories in the media can change, and looking at things over a longer or different period of time might

give us new insights. Although this study looks at information in different Indian languages, because there are so many different languages spoken in India, some local views may not be well represented. This is most likely to be the case with media that use less popular languages.

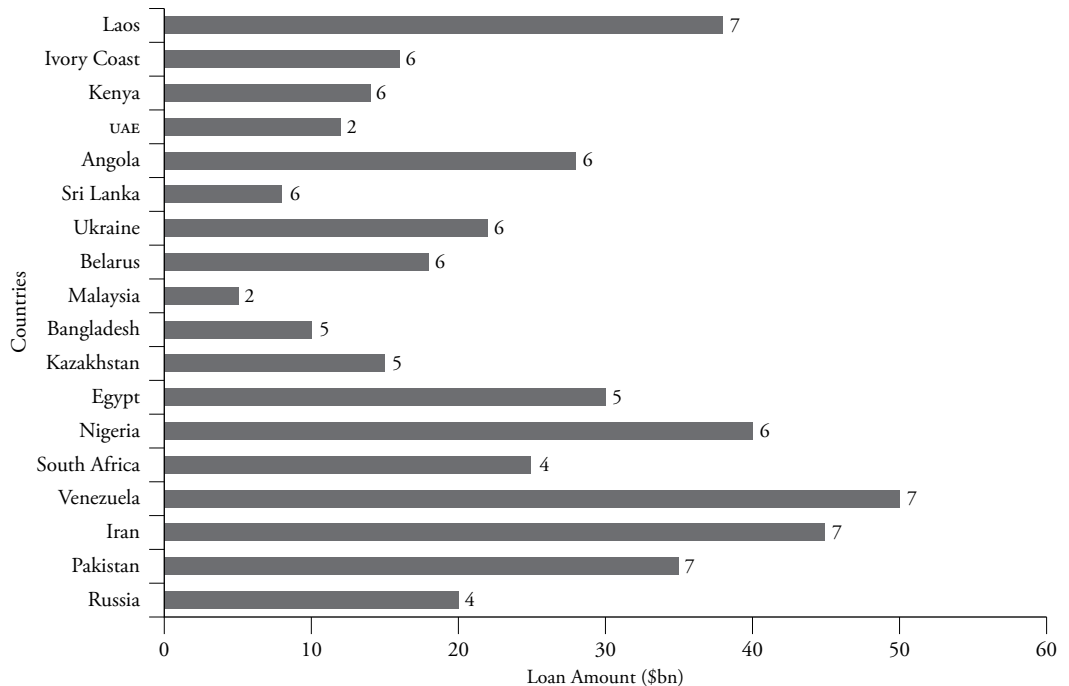
ANALYSIS OF INDIAN NEWS MEDIA DISCOURSES

The study of what the Indian news media is talking about when it comes to the BRI begins by identifying the main themes that emerge from their corpus. CDA shows what the media talk about and what they care about most in their stories. It also helps us understand how the BRI fits into the main themes or political views of Indian society. One main idea often discussed in the Indian media is the security and strategic implications of the BRI (Kandath, 2020). News articles often talk about how China's growing power in the region is affecting political relations, with much focus on big plans like the CPEC (Aslam *et al.*, 2020). India sees this as an encroachment on its sovereignty. This idea shows India's broader security concerns and its cautious approach to Chinese projects.

Another important issue is the financial side of the BRI. The news is divided between showing the possible monetary gains from joining the BRI plans, such as trade growth and putting more money to work, and expressing worries about things like being saddled with too much debt or not knowing clear details about Chinese

efforts (figure 2). This dual approach in the news illustrates the complicated financial movements between China and India. In India, the media often covers the BRI in terms of connectivity and governance. Various articles explain how the BRI might change local trade and travel routes, and what this might mean for India's role in South Asia and other places (Sengupta, 2024). The main point is India's ability to respond to or balance China's impact through its own actions in the region. The Indian media talks about how the BRI projects will affect the environment and society (Sachdeva, 2019), but not so much. News articles and opinion pieces express concerns about how huge infrastructure projects could damage the environment in ways that are difficult to repair, as well as their impact on people's lives. They are particularly concerned about what might happen in neighboring countries.

The news in India shows China and its BRI from many angles, which shows how complex the relationship between India and China is (Table 2). It's obvious that people know that China is gaining more power globally and the important plan behind the BRI (Umbach, 2022). News stories often talk about China's goals to change the way the world does business and government, with the BRI being a big help in this work. The BRI is often talked about as more than just an economic plan, but as China's way to gain power and control in Asia and other places (Asia Society Policy Institute, 2020). The press examines the country's political reasons for the BRI plans, pointing out

FIGURE 2. CHINA'S LOANS WITH HIGH RISK**TABLE 2. NEWS STORIES BY INDIAN NEWSPAPERS**

Newspaper	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
The Times of India News	50	80	145	185	310
The Times of India Editorials	8	4	7	8	12
Hindustan Times News	45	51	64	77	81
Hindustan Times Editorials	3	2	5	7	8
The Economic Times News	4	53	68	79	88
The Economic Times Editorials	5	3	4	8	6
Dainik Jagran News	55	51	78	98	176
Dainik Jagran Editorials	4	2	6	9	7
The Hindu News	35	46	76	83	92
The Hindu Editorials	3	2	4	6	5

concerns about what China wants to do in the future. Discussions also delve into the friendly relations between India and China, with the BRI usually being a key point of stress. The news reports show the good and bad changes in the two-way relationship driven by events related to the BRI.

The media use different methods to portray the BRI as a potential threat, while also considering the financial gains or losses associated with BRI projects. The beliefs of different news sources shape how they portray the BRI. News sites that are supportive of their own country or government often emphasize the dangerous aspects of the BRI, while those with a global view or economic

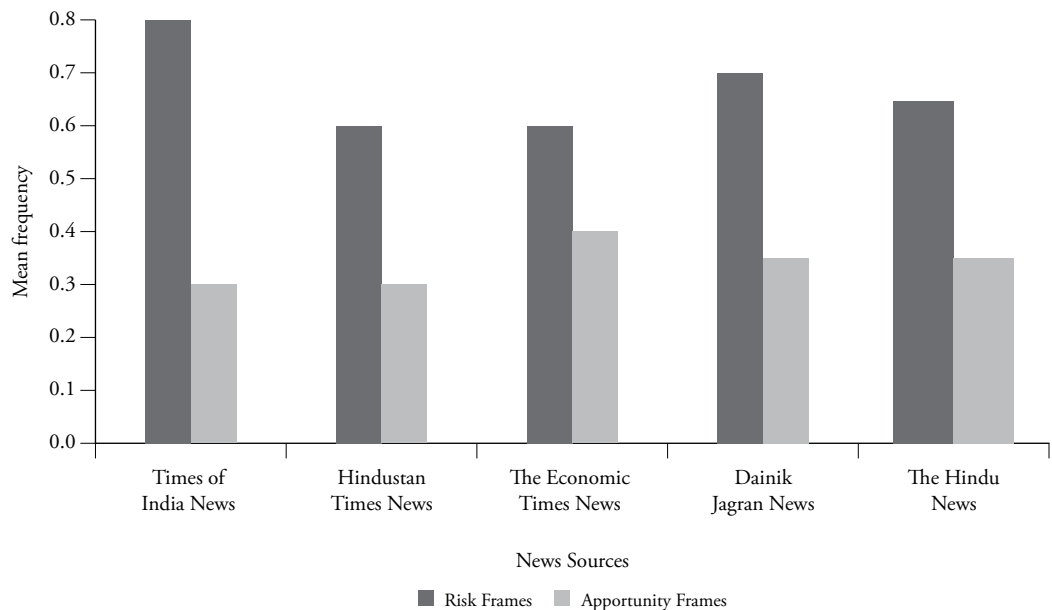
mindset highlight the potential opportunities it offers.

A look at the different views in the Indian media shows how diverse it really is. Some media platforms take a negative view of the BRI (Guo, 2023), focusing on security concerns and international competition. Others choose to be more helpful, talking about how India could join or benefit from certain parts of this action plan. This mix shows how many views there are in Indian culture, and the role of the media is to show these different opinions. A clear divide in the media narrative is between outlets that urge a practical, engagement-oriented approach to the BRI and others that urge caution and staying away. Stories supporting engagement often point to times when

economic opportunities were not taken and argue for careful conversations to use the BRI in a way that helps India (Tran, 2023). Warning stories, on the other hand, focus on the potentially significant costs, highlighting concerns about control and the need to balance China's power in this area.

Some news stories are set up in a way that talks about financial thinking, describing the BRI using general world business styles and what India needs for growth (figure 3). This is different from the more nationalistic talk that sees the BRI as a matter of country respect, freedom, and rivalry with China. These different views highlight the larger debate in India about how best to manage its complicated relationship with China.

FIGURE 3. INDIA MEDIA FRAMING ANALYSIS



Another difference is that the BRI is portrayed as an opportunity for local cooperation rather than as something that causes problems between two sides. Some stories highlight the opportunity to connect different regions and share wealth. On the other hand, some stories show that the BRI has exacerbated problems between India and China (Gupta, 2023). The discourse also shifts between views that support global integration and those that push for self-reliance. Some parts of the news say that India should be more involved in global efforts like the BRI to improve its strategic and economic position. Others argue for a more independent approach, focusing on its own growth and being cautious in dealing with global powers like China.

FINDINGS: ANALYSIS OF INDIAN NEWS MEDIA DISCOURSES ON THE BRI

KEY PATTERNS AND TRENDS IN DISCOURSE

A major point in the Indian news when discussing the BRI is the focus on security concerns and plans. Often, news and opinion articles discuss the political consequences of China's growing power through its BRI project (Sachdeva, 2023). Much attention is paid to plans such as the CPEC, which is seen as an encroachment on India's land control. This focus on big issues shows India's broader security thinking and its cautious approach to China's growth around the world.

The Indian media shows a detailed look at the financial parts of the BRI (Sharma,

2019). On the one hand, there is an understanding of the possible financial gains such as more buying and selling, investments, and construction of roads or buildings. On the other hand, there are concerns about whether the debt can be repaid in time, how clear the Chinese investments really are, and the possibility of becoming too dependent on their economy. This discussion about two things at once shows India's tough economic relationship with China and the difficulties of dealing with a large economic force while protecting what is best for our country. The Indian media presents a variety of views and beliefs, resulting in a multifaceted picture of the BRI. Some sources show this plan as an opportunity for economic and global cooperation, while others see it as a big problem or a threat to the country's control. The different stories we see in the media show the many views and thoughts of people in India.

Stories about the BRI are often tied to broader issues such as regional connections and India's influence in South Asia (Dhaka, 2023). Some stories see the BRI as something that helps increase regional cooperation and connectivity, while others see it as a plan by China to weaken India's long-term ties in these areas. This idea shows India's desire to become a major leader in the region and its reaction to China's growing presence nearby.

Though not as important as big plans and economic issues, the impact of BRI projects on nature and people is also much talked about in Indian news. These conversations are usually framed in the larger

context of balanced growth and careful global cooperation, reflecting a growing global awareness of how large projects can affect nature and people.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The media's attention to key concerns and careful handling of business opportunities with the BRI shows how India is approaching its larger foreign policy plan (Table 3). This method is known for its desire to maintain a strong position while dealing with delicate relationships with world leaders, especially China. The focus on freedom and the country's security in news stories fits well with India's cautious approach to the BRI, not getting involved in plans that could harm its important needs (Niu and Relly, 2021).

The different and sometimes conflicting stories in the Indian news show the difficult choices India has to make in dealing

with the BRI (Krishnan, 2023). Making the economy work well while dealing with cautious plans is a common problem. This shows that India is struggling to launch a project that may bring in money but may also take away its control over key decisions. This problem illustrates the larger problems India has in its dealings outside the country, especially in maintaining a fair balance between growing wealth, power over nearby areas, and security for all who live there.

The different discussions in the media about the BRI also show how people in India think and discuss political issues (Grossman, 2023). The variety of opinions in the news gives us a better idea of the nationwide conversation about how India should handle its difficult relationship with China. This diversity is very important in a free country like India, where what the press says can influence and show people's views. These views then change the way laws are made.

TABLE 3. FRAMES OF INDIAN NEWSPAPERS

Newspaper	Economic project	Global expansion/competition	Threat/conflict	Global dev./coop./benefit	Leadership	Human rights	Others	Total
The Indu News	43 (25.74%)	34 (20.36%)	10 (5.99%)	6 (3.59%)	4 (2.40%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (1.80%)	167 (100%)
Dainik Jagran News	39 (27.27%)	25 (17.48%)	13 (9.09%)	12 (8.36%)	10 (6.99%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.70%)	143 (100%)
The Times of India News	46 (31.29%)	18 (25.74%)	21 (14.29%)	12 (8.16%)	2 (1.36%)	1 (0.68%)	0 (0.0%)	147 (100%)
The Economic Times	38 (27.54%)	38 (27.54%)	7 (5.07%)	12 (8.70%)	2 (1.45%)	3 (2.17%)	0 (0.00%)	138 (100%)

The way the news shows the BRI makes it seem like they prefer a careful and thoughtful approach where India wants to show its interests and beliefs. This plan means working with China on common needs while being strong in areas where we don't agree or have problems. The stories told by the media show how important it is to have a way of dealing with things that does not just react, but acts first to shape India's foreign policy plan, considering both its relationship with China and the BRI.

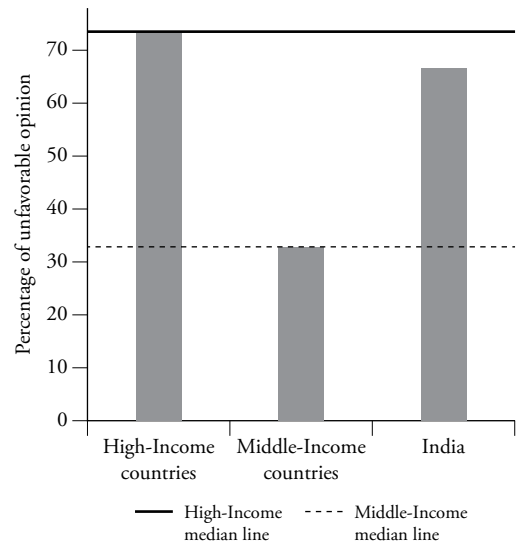
COMPARISON WITH GLOBAL MEDIA DISCOURSES ON BRI

Compared to the global media narrative, the Indian media focuses more on the strategic and global power implications of the BRI (Bharti, 2023). While global stories often talk about the economic growth possible with this plan, Indian stories stand out for their focus on their own security, their place as an independent country in control of things around them, and how it affects power-sharing nearby. This shows India's unique position and large role in its region, with a troubled past and ties to China.

In the global news, people often see the BRI mainly as trade, infrastructure plans like roads and bridges through it, and places to put their money to grow more. The economic links show how cautious India is about tying its economy to China. It shows their worries about becoming too dependent on or controlled by money coming from China and the moves it makes.

The Indian news shows a wider range and sometimes different stories compared to the more similar view in some global media sources (figure 4) (Huang *et al.*, 2023). This difference corresponds to the full and active way of democracy in India, where many thoughts and views are shown through the news. On the other hand, the world media's conversations about the BRI often don't have this kind of hard-to-understand details. They show either a general positive or negative attitude towards it.

FIGURE 4. UNFAVORABLE OPINION OF CHINA IN DIFFERENT COUNTRY CATEGORIES



The Indian news talks a lot about the BRI, and that's mostly because of what's happening in the region. They really look at how India is playing its part there and what it wants for South Asia as well. This way of looking at things is not as clear in stories from around the world, which tend to take

a broader view of the BRI that includes more global parts. Indian news focuses on how things are happening on the ground, showing the country's concerns about China taking more control in its near abroad and what it means if the BRI plans to touch local politics (Palit and Bhogal, 2022).

This comparison underscores the importance of the country's environment in shaping media conversations about global policies such as the BRI. Stories in India's media are closely tied to the country's history, politics and culture. This shapes how people in India see and talk about the BRI. This is different from what the media around the world say, because they may not understand a particular country's background well and may think about the BRI in many different ways.

DISCUSSION

IMPLICATIONS OF INDIAN MEDIA DISCOURSES ON BRI

The way the news in India talks about the BRI has a big impact on how people in India see it and what decisions they make about this important world event. The focus is mainly on big concerns, especially about control and power in the region. This shapes how people see and feel about the BRI. This can change the way rules are made, because the people making those rules have to think about how most of the public feels when they make decisions. So the Indian news media becomes an important link between the complicated global situations of the BRI

and how people in India understand these things.

The way the news shows and talks about the BRI reflects and reinforces India's careful plans in how it interacts with other countries, especially when it comes to China. The government is cautious and vigilant by worrying about the possible dangers to the country's security and governance. The way the news talks about the dangers associated with the BRI, such as getting stuck in debt (Vadlamannati *et al.*, 2023) or losing control over important decisions, is consistent with India's reluctance to fully accept this plan. The diversity of views on BRI in the Indian news allows for a nationwide discussion on how India should engage with this major Chinese effort. This debate is very important for a free society, where decisions about rules are better when they are discussed and scrutinized by the people. The media is a place to talk about the difficult parts of the BRI, giving many people, such as those who make the rules, professionals, and all citizens, a chance to participate in the country's conversation. The discussion of the BRI in Indian news groups also illustrates the importance of strong communications and public relations when dealing with other countries. The media's handling of the BRI can affect how India relates to other countries, not just China, but also those involved in or affected by the effort. The stories heard in the media about the BRI often go back and forth between acknowledging its potential financial benefits and showing concern about what they see as smart moves. This is indicative of a

larger issue in India's relations with other countries—trying to find the right balance between pursuing financial opportunities and maintaining freedom of action and security. The message spread by the media contains this problem and shows how difficult it is for India to deal with world leaders and global plans.

MEDIA DISCOURSE AND INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

How India's news discourse on the BRI is framed can have a significant impact on how India and China get along (Pant & Mann, 2023). The media's narrative has the potential to change the public's perception of China and can affect diplomatic negotiations (Musgrave, 2017). If news stories talk a lot about how China's BRI plan is risky, it may cause people to not trust China, which could lead Indian leaders to take harder measures. News that talks a lot about China's plans to control the world and the fear associated with things like its road project can make people more worried about what China is doing in this area. On the other hand, news that shows places where we can work together and both benefit economically can make people think better about engaging with China.

Indian news often talks about the BRI in terms of India-China rivalry (Chatterjee, 2024), especially when it comes to local power and smart placement. But there are also stories that support the idea of finding ways to work together in the larger scheme of the BRI (Balakrishnan, 2021). They say

that India could benefit by picking and choosing the parts it agrees with, and participating only where it suits its own needs. As the media shows, the BRI can control foreign policy on China. If people mostly see the BRI as a big problem, it can make it difficult for Indian leaders to work with China.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

In democratic countries like India, news and entertainment channels are very important in making and showing what most of the public thinks (Kumar, 2022). Talking about global efforts like the BRI is no different. The way the media talks about and explores these plans can greatly influence what people know and think, which then shapes conversations about equal rights for all. The way the media talks about the BRI can influence policy decisions by focusing on some parts more than others. For example, a story that talks about financial opportunities can make those who decide on rules consider participating in more BRI projects. On the other hand, if the story highlights the dangers, plans may be slowed down or even opposed because they think it could lead to problems. The media's large role in shaping public thinking and rules shows why people need to really understand how the media works. Knowing how media stories can shape difficult world problems is very important for the kind of intelligent public conversation that is needed to make democracy work well.

The way the Indian media talks about the BRI usually shows the larger concerns and hopes of society (Yang, 2021). This shows that the media does not only share facts, but also reflects what society as a whole thinks and feels. The way the Indian media talks about the BRI shows how much influence media stories have on what people understand. How news outlets view the BRI—as an opportunity, as a danger, or as a thorny issue of global power—has a big impact on public opinion. This framing can deeply affect choices about rules and policies, because it sets the boundaries within which people argue about those choices. Framing can also change India's relations with other countries. It does so by shaping the way leaders around the world see what India thinks about issues that matter to everyone.

The media can also help people understand difficult world issues such as the BRI in a simple way (Yadav, 2023). The media can help people deal with tricky issues by providing them with careful studies, different opinions, and information about their surroundings. This role is very important in matters of dealing with other countries, where the details of worldwide relations and plans may not be easy for everyone to understand. One of the most difficult things for the news media to do when forming public ideas and rules is to remain fair and level-headed, especially on difficult issues such as the BRI. The different types of news media in India offer many points of view, but they

can also lead to untrue or unfair reporting. Ensuring that the media remains a place for intelligent, fair, and mixed discourse is very important as it contributes to good public debate and thoughtful decisions by leaders.

Because the media has such a big impact, more and more people need to know how it works. Knowing how to carefully evaluate media content, spot one-sided views, and distinguish between informed opinion and analysis is very important. Also, encouraging people to engage with news about global rules like the BRI can make them smarter and more active citizens. As India grapples with its difficult relationship with China and what it thinks about global plans like the BRI, the role of the media as a news provider, a mirror of thought, and a force becomes more important.

Media groups must provide complete and detailed reports based on the truth to help people understand the multifaceted nature of global relations. Ensure the veracity of news to maintain the media's reputation as a reliable source of information. In addition to good reporting, it's also necessary to encourage people to think carefully about what they see in the media. Getting more people to understand the media, encouraging careful thinking, and pushing for a questioning society are all key to having an informed public. These skills are very important for people to be able to navigate the big mix of information that is out there and to participate in the public conversation in a helpful way.

CONCLUSION

This research examined how Indian news talked about the BRI, a large and complex global growth plan initiated by China. Using CDA, this research finds how the Indian media represent the BRI. The main claim is that the Indian news media discourse on BRI is a hybrid of ideological, economic and strategic considerations. Such stories illustrate the way India thinks about BRI in an intimate way; moreover, they contribute to what people understand and thus are likely to change how strong an impact India has on other countries.

The general ideas in this discourse focus mainly on two basic themes, security and strategic concerns, which indicate India's concern about what China might actually do in the future to the country itself and to peace in general. It also reflected the economic sections of the BRI, with a consideration showing careful study of how the Indian economy can benefit from its help and concern to try not to depend on it too much while ensuring that this help is sustainable.

The study revealed different opinions in the Indian media, i.e. people thought not everything was one-sided and their beliefs were very diverse. The study proved the extent to which media stories can change the public's beliefs and perhaps even influence the decisions of leaders—especially in the India-China relationship. The media provided a great platform for people to discuss and debate, giving them the opportunity to

look at different aspects of the BRI and what it might mean for India.

The findings of this study are critical in assessing how the media can shape public discourse and rules around large global projects, including the BRI. This study provides greater insight into the workings of media narratives in India. It adds to what we already know in the fields of communication studies and global relations. It also shows the importance of the media in presenting and shaping a country's views on global policy changes.

Ultimately, this research provides a detailed overview of how Indian media portray the BRI, uncovering complex connections between strategy, economics, and mindsets. The media's role in building the BRI has big implications for how people see it, how rules and plans are made, and how India fits into the larger map of world power. As India continues to grapple with its difficult relationship with China and where it stands in world affairs, knowing how the media is managing this is really important. This research not only tells us more about the details of the BRI, but also shows how media conversations help shape the actions of a country and the world.

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