

## **Soft Power from the Newsroom: Media Diplomacy and Cultural Narratives of China in Kyrgyzstan**

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### **Abstract**

With the development of globalisation and the constant expansion of regional processes, the importance of investigating international news components, which occupy a prominent place in shaping cooperation and cultural exchange between states, is growing. The purpose of this study was to analyse the structure and dynamics of news publications about China in the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek for January 2020-December 2022. The following methods were used to achieve the research objectives: deductive, content analysis, comparative. The findings of this study suggested that Vecherniy Bishkek is the main media outlet in Kyrgyz Republic, whose news reports reflect the objective attitude and position of the government and the people about China. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the materials found that the publications of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek on the topic "China" are characterised by a balance between a positive perception of cooperation and an understanding of the challenges and complexities of bilateral relations. This

approach helps form an objective and multifaceted view of Sino-Kyrgyz relations. The data analysis showed that the total number of media messages increases from year to year, and the emotional attitude is based on neutral messages, which account for more than 50 per cent. For January 2022-December 2022, 81.82 per cent of publications about China are presented as news stories to optimise and make it easy for readers to get information. The study found that due to differences in national contexts, the content of publications focused on political and economic aspects. Therefore, to improve mutual understanding between the people of the two countries, it is important to strengthen the cultural functions of the media and adopt differentiated strategies in the media space. Practical significance lies in the use of the findings of this study by researchers who investigate the market of communication media, as well as by specialists in the field of media.

**Keywords:** *Mutual Benefit, News Communities, Cooperation, Objectivity, Cultural Exchange*

## 1. Introduction

The connection between China and Kyrgyzstan is historically profound, influenced by geographical closeness, commercial exchanges, and political evolution throughout the ages. The old Silk Road, which enabled commercial and cultural exchanges between the East and West, was pivotal in connecting the two areas. Historically, the regions that comprise modern Kyrgyzstan served as crucial transit hubs for traders, intellectuals, and diplomats journeying between China and the Middle East, Europe, and South Asia. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), China influenced Central Asia through military campaigns and diplomatic endeavours to ensure stability along its western borders. The Mongol Empire's 13th-century expansion further assimilated the region into a broader Eurasian network, enhancing commercial and political connections. Nonetheless, when transcontinental trade routes declined throughout the early modern period and

the Russian Empire's influence in Central Asia grew, direct connections between China and the Kyrgyz people lessened. The contemporary era of Sino-Kyrgyz relations commenced in the early 1990s, coinciding with Kyrgyzstan's independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Diplomatic relations were formally initiated in 1992, signifying the commencement of a new phase of collaboration (UNESCO, 2025). The relationship has been defined by economic collaborations, infrastructural advancement, and regional security cooperation. China has become a principal economic partner of Kyrgyzstan, with substantial investments in transportation, energy, and commerce enabled by the Belt and Road Initiative.

In 2024, China represents Kyrgyzstan's largest trading partner, with 53 per cent of the nation's total imports (World Population Review, 2024). Bilateral commerce attained USD 22.71 billion in 2024, reflecting a 10 per cent rise from the prior year (Interfax Information Group, 2025). The commercial relationship is characterised by an imbalance. In the first quarter of 2024, Chinese exports to Kyrgyzstan reached USD 4.163 billion, while Kyrgyz exports to China were just USD 22 million. Numerous significant accords have delineated this bilateral relationship. The Bilateral Investment Treaty (1992) establishes a framework for the protection and promotion of investments. China - Kyrgyzstan Tax Treaty (2002), prohibits dual taxes and promotes business interactions. Recent accords encompass the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway Project, executed in 2024, designed to augment regional connectivity and prolong Belt and Road Initiative collaboration until 2026, synchronising infrastructure initiatives with Kyrgyzstan's developmental objectives (Khitakhunov, 2025).

The modern world is characterised by the rapid pace of globalisation, affecting the political, economic, and cultural processes of various countries, where a prominent place is occupied by the interaction of regional blocs, forming new partnerships and vectors of development. In recent decades, interest in the relationship between China and the Central Asian states, which represents a synthesis of global interests and regional ambitions, has been actively growing. The media play a key role in shaping public opinion and reflecting the dynamics of these relationships (Hopster, 2021). They not only cover current events, but also

shape images of countries, their political leaders, economic achievements, and cultural values. Modern media actively reflect geopolitical changes and economic specifics of states on the world stage (Cherviakova and Cherviakova, 2024; Ruf, Song and Zhang, 2021). In this context, China's relations with Central Asian states are attracting increasing attention, and regional cooperation within the framework of international initiatives is promoting tourism, science, and education, which is an added incentive to strengthen ties between the countries. However, in the age of information technology, it is important to critically analyse the information presented and to understand the motivational component of the news agenda.

China, as a global economic leader, aims to enhance its influence in Central Asia through market access, resource procurement, and the construction of transit corridors (Stoian, 2024). This collaboration promotes economic development and modernization for Central Asian nations. Media coverage emphasizes economic integration and cultural interchange (Lorenz-Spreen, Oswald, and Lewandowsky, 2023). The Sino-Central Asian connection has consistently garnered media attention (Wen, 2021), influencing public views of this politically and economically significant area (Kamruzzaman, 2022). Nonetheless, issues such as environmental hazards, economic reliance, and media representation also affect these narratives. The media significantly influence perceptions of Sino-Central Asian relations, highlighting both potential and problems in economic, social, cultural, and political spheres. This research investigates the impact of media on public perception, diplomatic interactions, and economic relationships. International news stories convey governmental stances and shape global dialogue. An in-depth examination of these processes will elucidate the media's influence on bilateral relations and highlight difficulties and opportunities for collaboration.

There are many studies that explore the various media environment processes that take place within Asian states. Thus, Nurmatov (2019) considers a wide range of interactions between the Kyrgyz Republic and China. This paper is dedicated to reflecting the perspectives of states, given the scale of the mainland. The author focuses on the cooperation of both states within the

framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Commonwealth of Independent States, which affect all aspects of the countries' development in the context of globalisation. Kurambayev (2016) analyses the main mechanisms of journalism and democracy in Kyrgyz Republic. He covers the mechanisms of the impact of victimisation among media industry workers. This study focuses on the processes of democratisation and freedom, which underlie the strong establishment of interconnections between neighbouring states through communication. Chekirova (2022) studies social networks as components of media space. The author describes their cross-border political participation by examining the online activism of Kyrgyz migrants. The topic considers the involvement of the Internet and online platforms in the emergence of social mobilisation as tools of information dissemination in the political influence of states.

Dzhunushalieva et al. (2022) characterise the features of media space in security conditions. Researchers emphasise legal regulation and the right of access to information. They explain the role of modern capabilities and technologies that are transforming the media environment and pushing its boundaries, providing an appropriate regulatory framework for proper media development. Authors consider the relevant criteria and aspects of environmental journalism, taking international media cooperation into account. It is based on specific materials of works by Kyrgyz authors that form the media environment. The paper examines the role of journalism in the international interaction of society with nature, which characterises the formation of environmental consciousness within initiatives and strategies. However, the possible biases and tendencies in the presentation of information, as well as the economic and political interests of media editorial policies within the framework of cooperation between Kyrgyz Republic and China have been understudied. Furthermore, the theoretical aspects of the interaction of global and regional processes on the topic "China" in the context of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek are not disclosed (Dzhumagazieva, 2020).

The purpose of this study was to examine the features and trends of news materials of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek for January 2020-December 2022,

concerning China. In this regard, it is possible to distinguish the following tasks of this study:

- to identify the key themes and accents in the newspaper materials related to the given problematic;
- to assess the volume and dynamics of coverage of topics in different periods;
- to identify the main genre forms in which the materials are presented.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The material base of this study included the news publications of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek about China for January 2020-December 2022. The news publications made it possible to identify the main emphases in the coverage of relations between China and Central Asian countries, as well as to figure out which aspects of events are in the focus of attention of Kyrgyz journalists. These materials helped to assess the objectivity and balance of information, which made it possible to understand whether the newspaper acts as a neutral media outlet or is influenced by certain political or economic interests. The publications under study provided an opportunity to determine the tone of coverage, to identify the dynamics of changes in the coverage of topics. This helped to identify the key issues and challenges of the media space, to establish the role of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek in the development of public discourse on the interaction between China and Central Asia.

The following methods formed the methodological framework of this study: deductive, content analysis, comparative. The deductive method at the stage of formulating the main theoretical assumptions helped to find the key concepts of relations between states and the role of media in the modern world, as well as to identify news aspects and topics in the context of specific states and their relations with China. It helped to reveal factors influencing the relationship between China and the Central Asian states, as well as their media coverage. Its elements provided an opportunity to focus on concrete aspects of the nature of the reflection of events and their interpretation. This method led to the

establishment of trends characterising the coverage of relations between China and Central Asian states in the media space. It provided a coherent approach to learning the topic by combining theoretical concepts with concrete material.

The method of content analysis at the stage of information collection helped to automate a considerable volume of articles and publications from the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek using Python software. Data collection was conducted during August-September 2023, in which 742 publications for January 2020-December 2022 on the official website of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek were analysed using a search engine with the keyword “China”. It helped to identify the emotional colouring of the publications, as well as to trace their dynamics and narrative form. Its elements conditioned the highlighting of the main topics discussed in the publications, which helped to better understand the structure of the newspaper’s news agenda. This method enabled a detailed quantitative analysis, implemented in Python, which was used to structurally evaluate news publications. It helped to conduct an in-depth and multifaceted analysis of news publications, which contributed to a fuller understanding of the mechanisms of coverage of the interaction between China and Central Asian states in the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek.

The comparative method at the stage of determining the features of the realisation of news reports made it possible to compare how attitudes and events were covered in various times. It helped to highlight formational differences in reporting approaches, while determining the extent to which the newspaper covered the components of cooperation between China and Central Asia. Its elements helped to find long-term trends in publications over a prolonged period, considering the economic and political initiatives of states. This method provided an objective and complete picture of the specifics of the coverage of relations between China and Central Asian states in the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek. It helped to understand the cultural, economic, and political contexts that shape the newspaper’s coverage of topics and to identify key suggestions and recommendations that will improve the process of relations between the countries.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 Cooperation, principles, and features of international news reporting between China and Kyrgyz Republic**

China and Kyrgyz Republic are two states separated by history and geography, but united by the desire to strengthen peaceful and long-term relations. Their interaction, stretching over many years, has become a model of mutually beneficial cooperation between two different countries. Cooperation between China and Kyrgyz Republic is based on a range of key elements, including political trust, economic interests, and cultural enrichment. These countries learn from each other and find common interests in various fields. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, the interaction between China and Kyrgyz Republic has shown dynamic growth (Pak, Menga, Feuer and Dowell, 2020). Economic partnership, political dialogue, and cultural exchange have formed an integral part of their interaction. Both states are firmly committed to strengthening their relations within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as well as in the broader context of regional security and stability. Proceeding from this, Sino-Kyrgyz Republic relations continue to develop, bringing new opportunities and challenges for both sides, strengthening media cooperation, expanding international ties, improving the quality of news, and the impact of communications, strengthening mutual friendship and expanding partnership to lay a more solid foundation for further regional development. The years 2020-2022 were characterised by the COVID-19 epidemic, which profoundly affected international political interactions and commerce. The epidemic in Kyrgyzstan interrupted supply chains, postponed infrastructure projects, and hindered economic growth, but China persisted as a crucial partner, offering medical assistance and maintaining commerce through modified logistics. Despite the obstacles, diplomatic interactions persisted, with both nations prioritising the enhancement of collaboration in sectors including health, infrastructure, and regional security, within the context of projects like the Belt and Road.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov has articulated many assertions underscoring the enhancement of bilateral relations with China. In early February 2025, during his state visit to Beijing, President Japarov affirmed Kyrgyzstan's dedication to advancing high-quality Belt and Road collaboration with China. He emphasised the significance of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project, asserting that it represents the most recent accomplishment of the Belt and Road Initiative and is crucial for maintaining the elevated level of relations between the two nations (Jingxi, 2025). Furthermore, President Japarov underscored the necessity of diversifying trade and fostering collaborative investment initiatives that correspond with the mutual interests of both countries. He observed that China's modernisation initiatives provide fresh prospects not only for Kyrgyzstan but also for the broader Central Asian region and other developing nations.

The media play a key role in contemporary international relations. In the case of China and Kyrgyz Republic, they become a valuable tool for strengthening diplomatic ties and expanding partnership between the two countries. In recent years, these states have intensified their efforts to increase information and cultural exchange. Kyrgyz media regularly cover China's economic and cultural initiatives, while Chinese media emphasise Kyrgyz cultural and tourism heritage. One of the key points of cooperation in the media sphere was the creation of joint television and radio programmes, as well as the participation of journalists from both countries in international forums and conferences. Through such interactions, people from both countries can get to know each other better, overcome stereotypes, and create the basis for long-term partnerships. Furthermore, the active use of digital platforms and social media allows for the instant sharing of news and opinions, making interactions more transparent and dynamic. Media space thus becomes a bridge for shaping foreign policy agendas and strengthening friendly relations, connecting China and Kyrgyz Republic in the era of digital diplomacy.

The media landscape of Kyrgyzstan comprises a combination of state-controlled, independent, and commercial sources, each exhibiting differing levels of proximity to the government. Vecherniy Bishkek, a prominent newspaper in Kyrgyzstan, holds a multifaceted position within this context. Historically, people

have viewed Vecherniy Bishkek as a relatively autonomous newspaper that occasionally aligns with governmental themes. This alignment is especially evident during substantial political or economic events, as the media may either mirror the government position or maintain a more neutral, balanced tone to circumvent controversy. The Kyrgyz populace typically views Vecherniy Bishkek as a credible information source, maintaining a degree of independence compared to other state-controlled media. However, governmental preferences may influence its editorial practices and reporting on sensitive political or economic matters.

Concerning censorship in Kyrgyzstan, although the nation is sometimes seen as more open than several Central Asian counterparts, media freedom remains constrained, especially for politically sensitive topics. The government exerts control over the predominant media channels, particularly via state-operated stations, but commercial media entities also face pressure and influence. The state uses several strategies to regulate media, including legislative constraints, selective enforcement, and the intimidation of journalists. For example, certain journalists encounter intimidation or threats for disseminating investigative findings on corruption or for critiquing government policy. Moreover, legislation concerning “extremism” or “defamation” may be employed to curtail press freedom and suppress dissenting opinions. Media outlets in Kyrgyzstan frequently practice self-censorship to evade legal consequences or governmental retaliation. The government has been known to exert its influence on advertisers to coerce media outlets into adhering to specific political themes. Nonetheless, a considerable level of media plurality persists, and independent journalists remain essential in ensuring governmental accountability, particularly via internet platforms and social media, which are less susceptible to direct oversight. Recent developments indicate that attempts to enhance the media landscape are underway, but the conflict between preserving independence and conforming to governmental expectations continues to provide a problem for Kyrgyzstan's media.

The international information space stands at the intersection of distinct cultures, identities, and political interests. The coverage of international news

between China and Kyrgyz Republic is no exception and requires consideration of several principles (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Basic principles of international news coverage between China and Kyrgyz Republic

Principles	Characteristics
Objectivity	Journalism dealing with international relations should endeavour to be as objective as possible, avoiding one-sided assessments and bias.
Cultural sensitivity	Considering the cultural and historical differences between China and Kyrgyz Republic, it is necessary to present information in a way that does not cause misunderstandings or conflicts on this basis.
Reliability of information	Adherence to the principle of fact-checking and use of reliable sources of information.
Dialogue and mutual understanding	Coverage of events should enhance dialogue rather than reinforce contradictions or create information barriers.
Ethics and professionalism	Respect for journalistic ethics and professional standards in covering any topic, especially one as sensitive as international relation.
Inclusiveness	Provide an opportunity for different points of view to be presented and the interests of both parties to be considered.
Adaptability	In a rapidly changing information landscape, it is important to be responsive and ready for new challenges

Adherence to these principles allows creating an objective, comprehensive, and multifaceted view of the current state of relations between China and Kyrgyz Republic, and to expand mutual understanding and trust between the countries and their peoples. They promote greater cultural and information exchange, which improves understanding and trust between the two countries. The subjects and audiences of international news events are diverse. Due to differences in the political, economic, and national systems of states, the causes and background of events influenced by ideologies are complex. The essence of the judgement about a particular news process is quite hidden, and its in-depth analysis often has a particular scenario.

China and Kyrgyz Republic, despite their geographical neighbourhood and shared history, represent distinct cultural, political, and social contexts. This is reflected in the features of the international news reports of both countries. Thus, Chinese media, oriented towards a massive population and centuries-old culture, emphasise cultural and historical aspects in their news, while Kyrgyz media emphasise national identity and cultural heritage (Reyaz, 2020). In China, the media is state-controlled, which is reflected in the tone and content of the news. In Kyrgyz Republic, despite its challenges, the media are relatively independent, which creates diversity in news approaches. Chinese news often covers infrastructure projects, investment, and cultural exchange, while Kyrgyz news often covers bilateral relations, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural interaction (Diekerhof, 2023). China's audience is domestically oriented, where, as the country's influence grows, interest in international news increases. In Kyrgyz Republic, attention is paid to both internal and external developments, especially in the context of relations with key partners.

The international relations between China and Kyrgyz Republic have profound historical roots and contemporary economic, cultural, and political aspects, which are reflected in diverse types of news reports (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Types of news stories between China and Kyrgyz Republic

Type	Characteristics
Economic news	They refer to bilateral economic cooperation, investment projects, trade, and economic forums. Elements such as the One Belt, One Road initiative are also discussed in this context.
Political news	Contains information on summits, agreements, diplomatic initiatives, and regional security.
Cultural and educational news	Regarding cultural exchanges, festivals, exhibitions, educational programmes, and scholarships for students.
Technical and scientific cooperation	Reflects research, innovation, technology exchange, and scientific seminars between the two countries.
Social and humanitarian news	Provide reports on humanitarian aid, social projects, and issues related to public health and welfare.
Tourism and sport	News about joint tourism initiatives, sporting events, competitions, and cultural travel.
Environmental news	Reports on joint projects in the field of ecology, sustainable development, and environmental conservation.
Security and defence	News related to regional security, counterterrorism, defence agreements, and joint exercises.

Consequently, the diversity of international news between China and Kyrgyz Republic reflects the depth and diversity of their bilateral relationship, which covers a wide range of areas, from economics and politics to culture and education. In today's world, where globalisation and international cooperation are becoming key factors in the successful development of countries, high-quality and diverse coverage of international news is of particular importance. It is this multifactor interaction that makes the news flow between the countries multifaceted, demonstrating the breadth and depth of their cooperation on the world stage.

Thus, it was determined that in the era of the information society, news serves as a fundamental basis between countries, shaping the image of a nation in the eyes of the world community and building an understanding of foreign policy priorities. International news reports between China and Kyrgyz Republic are no exception. Beyond the mere exchange of information about events and decisions lie deep cultural, economic, and political undertones. In doing so, the

choice of stories, the emphasis of coverage, and the style of reporting in the media of both countries are based on certain principles that provide a solid foundation for understanding the unique dynamics of the media environment, showing how events become a reflection of profound cultural and diplomatic ties. In addition, it is revealed that the features of the international news reports of China and Kyrgyz Republic reflect the uniqueness of each country, their interests, and priorities in the international arena. Their understanding allows to penetrate deeper into the essence of the relationship between the two countries and define their role in global processes.

### ***3.2 Analysis of the content structure and dynamics of news publications about China on the example of the Vecherniy Bishkek newspaper***

The Vecherniy Bishkek newspaper has long established itself as one of Kyrgyz Republic's main information sources, covering key events, trends, and news in the region. The newspaper has been a leader among print media for a long time. Through its long history and principles of journalism, it has earned the trust and respect of its readers. The focus of Vecherniy Bishkek is topical news, analytical articles and reports covering various spheres of Kyrgyz life. In the context of intensifying cooperation between Kyrgyz Republic and China, its role in transmitting relevant and objective information becomes even more important. The coverage of bilateral relations, economic, cultural, and political initiatives in the pages of Vecherniy Bishkek not only shapes the image of China among the regional public, but also reflects the interests and sentiments of the Kyrgyz population regarding cooperation. Thus, on the official website of the newspaper, thanks to the introduction of the term "China" as a search engine keyword, the total number of news reports related to assorted topics of the state for January 2020 – December 2022 was calculated (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Classification of thematic content of Vecherniy Bishkek reports on “China” for January 2020 – December 2022

Content	Years		
	2020	2021	2022
Politics	181	238	241
Economy	111	132	137
Public	159	145	121
Culture	32	36	54
Sport	5	8	15
Literature	1	6	12
Training	2	16	20
Tourism	0	3	3
Regions	0	5	0
Elections	0	1	1
President	17	23	41
World news	55	128	130
<b>Total number of publications</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>264</b>

Thus, the analysis of the newspaper's publications shows that the most frequent reports on “China” are events of political and economic contexts, which have dynamic growth for 2020-2022, as well as world news. Consequently, a great deal of attention is paid to Chinese political life. News about domestic and foreign policy, activities of the head of state, parliament, and government regularly appear on the pages of the publication. The economic section most often contains information on investment projects, exchange rates, trends, and forecasts of economic development. This tendency towards political and economic coverage is due to the fact that, as members of the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation, the two countries often exchange political opinions (Zelizer, 2019). The two sides also understand and support each other in some international affairs, and their political mutual trust is deepening day by day. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has become an important platform for international interaction between China, Kyrgyz Republic, and other Central Asian countries. Furthermore, large-scale projects are being actively implemented under the One Belt, One Road initiative. States are actively promoting the construction of international highways to effectively facilitate trade, tourism, and transport. Even amid pandemic and global instability, Chinese investment in Kyrgyz Republic continues to grow.

The positive articles emphasise the advantages and triumphs of the Sino-Kyrgyz partnership, highlighting economic growth, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic accomplishments. For instance, they may highlight China's investments in infrastructure or educational partnerships. Conversely, negative stories emphasise the dangers or obstacles, like economic dependency on China, environmental concerns, or security issues, frequently underscoring the possible disadvantages of this expanding connection. An illustration may involve apprehensions over Kyrgyzstan's growing dependence on Chinese loans. Articles that are neutral report events, data, or agreements, like trade volumes or official visits, without giving their opinion on what they mean. They are factual and do not have a clear positive or negative tone. Collectively, these pieces influence public attitudes by offering a balanced perspective on the bilateral relationship.

Vecherniy Bishkek is a full-fledged information resource that provides its readers with a comprehensive understanding of current events and processes between Kyrgyz Republic and China, while covering a variety of spheres of

society. In this regard, when analysing the publications on the topic “China,” certain emotional tendencies are noticeable, which characterise the approach of the editorial staff to the coverage of Chinese-Kyrgyz relations. Thus, most of the publications are neutral. This is especially true for materials on economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and educational programmes. There is a cautious attitude towards some aspects of cooperation, especially economic initiatives that may affect the economy of Kyrgyz Republic (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Emotional trends of publications of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek on the topic “China” for January 2020-December 2022

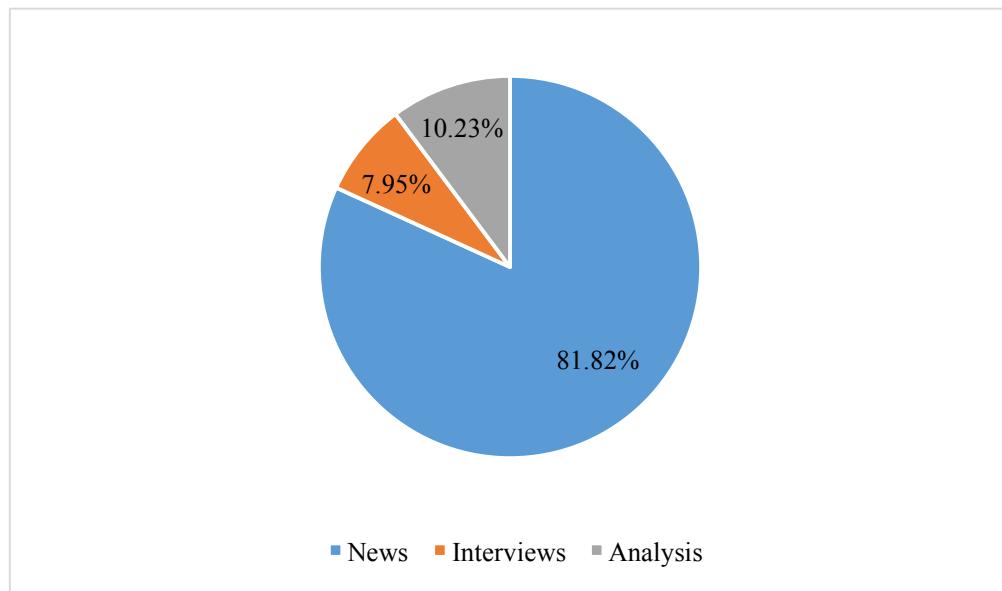
The emotional nature of the trends			
Years	Positive	Negative	Neutral (objective)
2020	93	2	125
2021	82	14	162
2022	91	16	157

Among 220 news articles in 2020, neutral reports accounted for 56.82 per cent, positive reports accounted for 42.27 per cent, and negative reports accounted for 0.91 per cent; among 258 news articles in 2021, objective reports accounted for 62.79 per cent, positive reports accounted for 31.78 per cent, and negative reports accounted for 5.43 per cent; among 264 news articles in 2022, objective reports accounted for 59.47 per cent, positive reports accounted for 34.47 per cent, and negative reports accounted for 6.06 per cent. This state of affairs emphasises that the attitude of the Vecherniy Bishkek newspaper of Kyrgyz Republic towards China is generally quite good. Materials on the topic “China”

are often provided with comments of experts, analysts, and specialists, which gives publications additional depth and allows the reader to better understand the essence of the issue. A striking example is the publication on “Chinese modernisation is an alternative model for developing countries” (Nichiporova, 2022). However, despite its positive attitude towards cooperation with China, the newspaper tries to stay objective, covering difficult moments in the relations between the two countries, such as economic or environmental challenges, and looking for possible ways to optimise cooperation.

In recent years, it is noticeable that the materials of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek devoted to China are mainly presented in the format of news. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, China is a country with rapidly changing political, economic, and social dynamics. The events taking place there can have a direct impact on the Central Asian region as well as on the world stage. Thus, informing readers quickly and promptly becomes a priority for the editorial office. Secondly, the news format allows for a concise and succinct presentation of key information, making the material accessible to a wide audience. In conditions of information excess, when the reader is literally “drowning” in the flow of news, brevity and clarity of presentation become the key to successful communication with the audience. Nevertheless, despite the predominance of news content, the newspaper also offers in-depth analytical articles and interviews that allow for a deeper dive into the topic and understanding of the context of what is happening (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Genre ratio of publications of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek on the theme “China” for January 2022 – December 2022



It follows that news reports – short and concise notes presenting the most recent and topical events – are the most frequently used by Vecherniy Bishkek newspaper. Their specific feature is that such materials contain factual information without in-depth analysis or commentary. The next niche is occupied by analytical articles, which try to delve deeper into the topic, looking at the causes, effects, and potential consequences of a certain event or phenomenon. In the case of China, such publications concern economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and political initiatives. The final link is the interviews. Often, they are used to show readers the different points of view of experts, politicians, specialists, and business representatives (Charron, Annoni, 2021). Therefore, Vecherniy Bishkek, covering the relations between Kyrgyz Republic and China, uses a wide

range of genres, which allows readers to receive multifaceted information about this subject. Such diversity contributes to a full and objective perception of the situation in the region.

Public opinion polls in Kyrgyzstan have clarified the populace's perspectives of China, indicating a multifaceted and dynamic environment. Thirty-seven percent of Kyrgyz respondents perceived China as the foremost economic danger, underscoring apprehensions over economic reliance and the possibility for debt traps linked to Chinese investments (Karibayeva, 2020). In contrast, a 2018 study by the International Republican Institute revealed that 52 per cent of Kyrgyz respondents viewed China favourably, indicating that a substantial segment of the society acknowledges the advantages of Sino-Kyrgyz collaboration (International Republican Institute, 2019). However, Dukeyev (2024) describes a more intricate scenario. The research indicated that over 70.5 per cent of participants in Kazakhstan held a negative view of China, with 35.2 per cent categorising their viewpoint as "somewhat unfavourable" and 35.3 per cent as "very unfavourable." This data relates to Kazakhstan but also mirrors wider regional attitudes that may affect opinions in Kyrgyzstan. These findings highlight the complex and dynamic character of public opinion in Kyrgyzstan about China, shaped by economic ties, cultural interactions, and geopolitical shifts.

The data analysis revealed that Vecherniy Bishkek's reports on China are mainly devoted to politics and economy, while there are too few publications on culture. However, friendship between states lies in mutual closeness between peoples, which requires strengthening the cultural and value connection between China and Kyrgyz Republic according to the principle of "culture first" (Ghaly, Dang and Stathopoulos, 2020). Therefore, it is important for the media to

strengthen the dissemination of the common cultural heritage of the two countries and make full use of the rich historical documents to create and report literary works on the history of friendly exchanges (Rollberg and Laruelle, 2015). In addition, cooperation between Chinese and Kyrgyz media should be strengthened, and cultural exchange, singing, dancing, calligraphy, painting, and food events should be widely organised and expanded (Hutchings, Asamoah-Gyadu, Evolvi and Han, 2020). In the context of globalisation, the media's ability to focus on promoting mutual understanding and recognition in the context of history and reality, and to contribute to the friendly improvement of bilateral relations through an active and open approach, is of particular importance.

Thus, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the publications of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek revealed that most of the messages in the media space belong to the genre of news, and political reports occupy a principal place in the coverage of interrelations between Kyrgyz Republic and China. Political mutual trust is at the centre of attention and dissemination of information between states. The analysis of the content structure and dynamics of news publications about China in the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek revealed a range of noteworthy features and trends. Throughout the period under study, one can observe a persistent interest in Chinese topics, which emphasises the relevance of this direction in the Kyrgyz media. Content analysis showed that most publications are presented in news format. This may indicate the newspaper's desire to quickly inform its audience about key events related to China. However, along with the news reports, there are also interviews and in-depth analyses that allow the reader to get a detailed understanding of the context of current events.

#### **4. Discussions**

The international community pays special attention to news media publications that contribute to the “cultural power” of the people to build a country’s image and create a national worldview. Information organisations are much more than just information dissemination systems. For countries that intend to promote public diplomacy, international news acts as a primary tool to reinforce state interests on the world stage. According to Coker (2023), international news reports always reflect the voice of the country, which consists in the politicisation of reporting positions, diversification of communication channels, and their methods of dissemination. The very activities of media and public opinion have a strong political nature that can be accompanied by government propaganda, while exporting the values of the state in international communication. The current international news channels are in a trend of diversification. With the help of mobile Internet, big data, social media, and artificial intelligence, they reflect communicative characteristics such as strong penetration and attachment to events, social empowerment, reconstruction of spatio-temporal relationships between information transmission and reception, and the complex transformation of the media environment. Media convergence has undergone all aspects of integration, from digital to organisational form, creating a broader distribution pattern of public access to news information. In analysing the information, it is observed that the media, in one way or another, lends itself to transformational changes that are regulated by the international community, given the political ambitions of the state.

From the perspective of Verboord and Kristensen (2021), in the general environment of global economic integration, the connection between people and the world is becoming increasingly inseparable, which undoubtedly makes the public pay more attention to international events. In today’s world, where borders between countries are becoming less and less visible and the process of globalisation is increasing, international news is of particular relevance. But with the active integration of individual states, as economic, political, and social ties are strengthened, international journalism faces new challenges. The coverage

of international events should not only convey relevant information, but also consider the numerous nuances of bilateral and multilateral relations, as well as the specifics of integration processes. International news has always been a living reflection of foreign policy processes and interstate relations. With the increased cooperation of states at various levels, the role of such coverage becomes even more important. When countries join economic alliances, conduct joint military exercises or enter into cultural agreements, the importance of accurate and timely information to citizens about these events increases. This not only allows the population to better understand the current foreign policy situation, but also forms an image of another state, its people and culture. The data reviewed by the researchers echo the findings, emphasising that the media occupy a prominent place in reflecting and shaping relations between states.

The position of Chen et al. (2021) emphasises that the media play a key role in shaping society's opinion of cooperation partners. Their objectivity, professionalism, and responsibility determine how correctly and fully the information will be perceived. Therewith, a balanced and impartial approach to international news coverage is particularly relevant in the context of interconnected countries. Furthermore, the cooperation of states involves the exchange of experience, technology, knowledge, which is also reflected in the news. This can apply to large infrastructure projects as well as small joint initiatives in culture, education, or science. However, one should not forget that in cooperative environments, conflict situations also arise, which also require media attention. In a globalised world, information flows around the world and news of a conflict in one part of the world instantly reaches another. However, when it comes to countries linked by close economic and political relations, reporting on such conflicts requires special tact and neutrality. Here it is particularly important to maintain a balance and avoid misrepresentation of information in favour of one of the parties. The media are responsible for creating an objective and unbiased image of the events taking place. This is particularly important when countries' economic cooperation may suffer due to misunderstandings or misinterpretation of conflict situations. The findings of this study also emphasise

that it is important for the media space to adhere to the principles of journalism by focusing on neutrality and objectivity, regardless of the nature of the events.

According to Brosius et al. (2020), journalists and editors should be aware of the possible consequences of their publications and strive to ensure that their materials contribute to the resolution of the conflict rather than its aggravation. It should also be considered that in the modern world many conflicts have a hidden side, related to the struggle for markets, resources, or influence in a certain region. Political players actively use the media environment as a platform to achieve their goals. This can be the dissemination of certain agendas, image building, compromising opponents, or manipulating public opinion to create the desired image. Economic players, for their part, are also not being left behind. Large corporations and business structures have their own corporate communication media or enter into partnership agreements with independent media. This allows them to build a positive company image, attract investment, influence consumer decisions, or even manipulate markets. However, this impact of media on society has a downside. With globalisation and digitalisation, information spreads instantly, and therefore any attempt at manipulation can be uncovered and cause a backlash. Public scandals related to falsified news or inaccurate information can lead to a loss of trust in a particular resource, negatively affecting international cooperation and integration. The researchers' rationales echo the findings of this paper, highlighting a definite link between the activities of news organisations and the political and economic components of the country in which the media environment operates.

Researchers Howe et al. (2020) believe that considering cultural and social differences between countries will help to avoid misunderstandings and errors in interpreting news. In today's world, media acts not only as a source of information, but also as a platform for cultural exchange between nations. This is especially true for countries actively cooperating in the political-economic sphere. Cultural exchange allows TV channels, radio stations, and newspapers to provide audiences with rich and diverse content, covering events, festivals, traditions, and arts of the partner country. For readers, such a process opens new horizons and allows them to learn more about the culture, history, and customs of

neighbouring countries. In the context of political and economic cooperation, such exchanges through the media help to create a positive perception of the partner country, which is important for building trusting relations. The media environment is becoming an instrument of soft diplomacy, creating favourable ground for resolving issues in the economic and political spheres. Joint projects such as films, documentaries, and music videos stimulate the creative and professional development of media industries, while media content in different languages can be a motivation to learn the speech of the partner country, which reinforces cultural and business ties. The researchers' findings coincide with the conclusions obtained in this paper, emphasising the importance of developing the cultural component of the media, which forms the basis for successful interaction and cooperation between countries.

In conclusion, having analysed the trends and specific features of media functioning in the conditions of interaction of global and regional processes between countries it was revealed that international news plays a crucial role in the development of mutual understanding and trust between countries. They serve as a fundamental element linking peoples and as a tool to help strengthen international relations at various levels. Despite all the complexities and challenges facing the media, the pursuit of balance and objectivity is still the paramount task of journalism. This is the only way to ensure the trust of the audience and to foster international cooperation in the face of global challenges. In addition, cultural exchange through media was found to be an effective tool for strengthening international relations at various levels. In the context of political and economic cooperation, it plays a key role in enhancing cultural dialogue, increasing mutual understanding, and building trust between states.

## 5. Conclusions

The study found that in the era of globalisation and accelerated information dynamics, the importance of adequate media coverage of international relations is of particular importance. China, as the most important geopolitical

and economic partner for many countries, including Kyrgyz Republic, is the centre of attention of the world and national media. The newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek, for many years, has been one of the leading information sources in Kyrgyz Republic, covering current news, analyses, and reviews of world and regional events. Among a wide range of topics, special attention is paid to bilateral relations between Kyrgyz Republic and China. This attention to this topic gives rise to a variety of genre forms of information presentation.

The importance of the genre aspect lies in its ability to shape a certain perception of events among readers, to emphasise key moments and to reveal the dynamics of the relationship between the two countries. The basic principles of their coverage were the result of long historical, cultural, and political interactions. Above all, balance and objectivity are at the top of the list. With globalisation and multiple information sources, maintaining the trust of the audience is only possible if the rules of honest journalism are followed. The second key principle is cultural sensitivity. Also noteworthy is a commitment to in-depth analyses and explanations of complex international processes. News coverage is not limited to superficial reporting of facts but aims to give the audience a comprehensive understanding of what is happening. Cooperation between China and Kyrgyz Republic contributes not only to the expansion of the information field, but also to the strengthening of friendly relations between the two states.

Furthermore, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the publications of the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek made it possible to reveal that a large half of the materials for the period January 2020 – December 2022 on the topic “China” characterizes a neutral attitude and coverage of events, where the economic and political nature prevails, given the joint promotion of various initiatives, strategies, and programmes. In addition, it was found that over 80% of the publications at the end of 2022 are presented by the newspaper in the form of news reports, conditioning their practicality and speed. The specific feature of the newspaper is its in-depth analytical approach to the issues of bilateral cooperation. Vecherniy Bishkek not only informs its readers about events, but also provides expert opinions and interviews with specialists, which allow readers to

see the full picture of relations between the two states. Nevertheless, the contributions also reflect the complexities and contradictions that sometimes arise during cooperation. The newspaper endeavours to maintain a balance between positive and critical coverage, allowing readers to make their own assessment of the situation.

The analysis of publications revealed the newspaper's active coverage of prominent moments of bilateral relations between China and Kyrgyz Republic, as well as key events within China of international importance. Thus, the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek plays a vital role in shaping the Kyrgyz audience's perception of China. It provides its readers with relevant, diverse, and competent information, contributing to a profound understanding of the complex dynamics of country-to-country relations and current processes in China. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the purpose of this study was fulfilled. However, the study of socio-cultural aspects within the functioning of modern media requires further research.

## Notes

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