

Abstract

The following thesis conducted a case study to investigate the opinion of experts working on the Bombay-Ahmadabad HSR and Ankara-Istanbul HSR on how China uses HSRD and BRI to develop and utilize its soft power and whether that opinion matches the official Chinese point of view. The official Chinese view about BRI is that it seeks to deliver win-win outcomes, development, and improvement of lives for participating countries. In addition, it ‘has no geopolitical motives, seeks no exclusionary blocs, and imposes no business deals on others … addresses people's desire for a better life … and shared benefits.’

Ramo (2007)’s operationalization of the term global image was used to assess the respondents’ opinions. The results showed that there is low dependability of the overall BRI among the respondents. A majority of the respondents (60%) claimed that BRI and HSRD are successful but were not impressed by the delivered value and quality of BRI. 70% of the respondents believed that the Bombay-Ahmadabad HSR would achieve its objective and that it had a high level of technology. In terms of financial, social and political impact, the responses showed proportions of 40%, 37%, 44% respectively gave a positive answer. Overall, it can be concluded that in terms of image the Bombay-Ahmadabad gave conflicting results since 70% view the project as one having a high cost of construction.

For the Ankara-Instanbul project, 75% and 76% of them considered the project as effective and with high technology; an indication that respondents consider the project as one with high dependability and leading tech. Although 75% of them viewed the project’s trade impact as positive, only 57% 43% and 53% of them considered political, social, and financial respectively as positive; resulting in a fairly positive view of the project.

The results show that China still has a lot of work to do when it comes to improving its image in relation to its BRI projects. The participants were sceptical about the political, social, and financial impacts. Their view also contradicted the official Chinese view as a majority belied the projects were also used to improve China’s political power.