

**In between the global and the local:
defining corporate social responsibility standards in the Belt and Road**

Abstract: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been extensively discussed in academia since 1950s and becomes prominent, if not expected, practices of contemporary corporations. Yet, neither scholars nor corporate managers have reached a consensus about the definition and scopes of CSR. With the emergence of multinational corporations that own or control production of goods and services in different jurisdictions and cultures, defining CSR becomes even more difficult. A recent trend of legalization of CSR also poses a challenge to the common belief that CSR “begins where the law ends”, i.e. a voluntary corporate behaviour that is not required by laws. This paper attempts to offer an alternative view to resolve the aforementioned difficulties by adopting pragmatic approach, which considers CSR is resulted from interaction of various stakeholders in particular time and social contexts and thus variations in terms of definitions and practices should be allowed. This approach will be examined in the context of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which involves more than 130 countries of different socio-economic background. In view of this complexity, this paper argues that neither global (universal) approach nor local (multi-domestic) standard of CSR should be employed by Chinese corporations investing in BRI countries. Instead an integrated approach, which strikes a balance between universal expectations and local concerns, is relatively suitable and defensible for both practical and ethical reasons.

Introduction

1. Evolution of CSR conceptualization
2. International of CSR: global-local debate
3. Belt and Road Initiative and pragmatic approach of CSR