Building Legitimacy in the Global Political Economic Order: China's Efforts and Its Legitimacy Challenges

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Abstract. This article conducts a discussion on the questions: how does global political economic order generate legitimacy? Of which, this article wishes to shed some lights on the mechanism of legitimacy construction at the international level and provides theoretical explanation of how newly growing powers participate in the current construction of the global political economic order and establish legitimacy of the global order they advocate. This article uses "legitimacy" and "global order" or "world order" or "international order" as the keywords and conducts search on datasets of Google Scholar, Jstor, Tylor & Francis, Elsevier to researches since 2000 onward to gain as wide scope as possible. After screening, 17 articles are included to review the source of legitimacy. This literature review thus concludes that compellence, substantial interests, and value as three sources of legitimacy. Then this article investigates "Belt and Road Initiative" as the case and the English School of International Relations theory to provide a path of building legitimacy of the global political economic order via common interests and value shared. Furthermore, by utilising the English school's perspective, common interests and common values generate legitimacy of the order, this article also finds that China's participation in constructing and shaping global order through the "Belt and Road" Initiative encounters two major legitimacy challenges: performance challenge and value challenge. This article then argues that China needs to consider the interest convergence path and value convergence path of generating legitimacy for global order China advocates.

Keywords: Legitimacy; Global Political Economic Order; English School; "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI).

1. Introduction

When it comes to explaining the evolution of the global political economic order, a conventional wisdom has always existed in academia and society and held that order, norms, and legitimacy are merely projections of the material interests of the most powerful states on a global scale. This discourse defines order, norms and legitimacy as a form of material interest, instrumentalises the significance of these concepts for actors and the political economic order as a whole, and implicitly suggests that relations between global actors remain an endless struggle for material power relations and material interests. However, as many theorists have pointed out, material power alone cannot successfully establish and maintain order. Power also needs to be legitimised in order to sustain a stabilised global system. Though stability does not always mean peace, it does mean a predictable future, lower costs of development and maintenance of stability, and higher returns. This article therefore seeks to explore the relationship between order and legitimacy. More specifically, it wants to provide a review on how legitimacy is defined, how a certain order produces legitimacy, and how emerging actors can better participate in the construction of order through the construction of legitimacy.

This article thus first identifies global political economic order as a substantially and conceptually systemic space for all global political and economic actors which coexist, coact, and interact with each other. Second, this article defines legitimacy of global political economic order as the normative intersubjective relationship with acceptability and voluntary compliance sustained by material power and interest. Then, this article identifies three sources of legitimacy: compellence, rational interest calculation, and value. Third, this article reviews the mainstream international relations theories and thereby provides the paths of building legitimacy of the global political economic order through the

English School's perspective: common interests and value shared generate legitimacy. Via discussing the sources of legitimacy and path that particular order generates legitimacy, this article then investigates China's participation in constructing and shaping global order through the case of the "Belt and Road" Initiative to analysis two major legitimacy challenges: performance challenge and value challenge that China currently faces to and argues that China needs to pay more attention on the public good provided, interest convergence, and value convergence in constructing its legitimacy for global order China advocates.

The second section then will undertake a literature review conceptualising global political economic order, its legitimacy, and sources of legitimacy. The third section will utilise the English School of International Relations theory to provide the path for the construction of legitimacy of the global political economic order. The fourth section will explain the legitimacy challenges faced by China in its participation in the construction of the global order through the case study of the "Belt and Road" Initiative and propose possible paths for China to further participate in the construction of the global political economic order.

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

This section goes in threefold. First, this section provides a definition and explanation of "global political economic order" through the English School lens. Second, this section provides a literature review on the definition of legitimacy and the sources of legitimacy. Legitimacy is then understood as a mix of material power influence and normative intersubjective relationship. The sources of legitimacy argued in literatures were identified as a trio of factors: coercion, rational calculation of substantial interests, and concepts of belief, institutions, norms, rules, and value. Third, this section identifies the research gap of prevailing literatures on legitimacy of global political economic order. The existing literature focus little on the path of legitimacy construction of global order, focusing mostly on the analysis of interest calculations and confidence in material power and interests, domestic legitimacy, sand fewer studies have focused on the mechanisms of legitimacy generation and the legitimacy of the global order advocated by China. Of this, two fundamental questions are made: what is the global political economic order, and what is legitimacy?

2.1. Global Political Economic Order

This section borrows the British School's interpretation of order to answer the first question: order is the totality of relations between major actors, and a political and economic system between actors [1]. The global political economic order is thus the physical and conceptual space in which global political and economic actors co-exist, act, and interact with each other and all the systems that these actors produce. In this space, sovereign states, if not exclusively, are among the most important actors. However, that a unified global order is a product of a very "new" human history. In fact, a unified global political economic order did not really exist until the late19th century and the early 20th century. It can therefore be argued that norms, laws, and principles of legitimacy that accompanied with orders vary across time and region.

Second, the understanding of order also depends on the perspective adopted by the actors. If we see order as a means rather than an end, then order is merely a tool used by the main political actors to achieve their ends. This is particularly true for the era of formal empires. If we understand order as a being above the main political actor, i.e., although there is no political entity above the main actors, order still binds the behaviour of the main actors, whether this is achieved through material, institutional, conceptual or normative means. The global order is then itself a result of and a factor leading to political behaviour. This article takes the second perspective and thus the analysis of legitimacy constructing mechanism of global order become meaningful.

Furthermore, order implies that there are sufficient links between at least two or more actors to make them different parts of a whole. Only when there is more than one actor, can the order become meaningful. Only when the interconnection and mutual influence between actors are significant

enough, order can be established as the overarching structure for every actor to comply or challenge. Actors are interconnected in such a systematic way that changes in one factor led to changes in other parts and the system as a whole exhibits different properties and behaviors [2-3].

2.2. Legitimacy

In response to the second question, the legitimacy is defined as a normative intersubjective relationship with acceptability and voluntary compliance sustained by material power and interest through a literature review on sources of legitimacy. Three vital factors—compellence, rational interest calculation, and value—serve as both sources and mechanisms that how material power and normative concepts generate legitimacy.

First, the unequal distribution and hierarchy of material power generate and sustain the foundation of legitimacy. This legitimacy is characterised primarily by coercion and the acceptance of compellence. Through a multidimensional comparison of legitimacy and power, Symons finds that the influence between actors is an important factor in shaping legitimacy relations [4]. Legitimacy allows some dominant actors to control or influence the perceptions and actions of those who are not dominant. Legitimacy serves as a sort of structural power. Criteria of legitimacy thus constitute the identity of actors in power, guiding them to act in the way they see fit.

Second, legitimacy is based on utilitarian, rational calculations, and the pursuit of superior performance. For example, Panke, Polat, and Hohlstein find that the effectiveness and normativity of international organisations in solving problems is crucial in shaping the legitimacy of these orders [5]. Verhaegen, Scholte, and Tallberg found the importance of utilitarian calculations, social identity, and domestic preferences in constructing the concept of legitimacy by examining the relationship between domestic elites and international organisations [6]. The more satisfied elites are with the three dimensions of democracy, efficiency and equity, the more they consider international organisations that meet these conditions to be legitimate. Kentikelenis and Voeten provide a discursive analysis of speeches at the United Nations General Assembly over the period 1970-2018 and argue, first, that the legitimacy challenge that global economic institutions face in the post-Cold War period is about how well these institutions manage this integration of market economies [7]. Second, the silence of international actors in response to the current inappropriate order or action confers a passive legitimacy due to the high cost of roll-out. Dellmuth, Scholte, and Tallberg find that procedural settings and performance matter for people's beliefs about the legitimacy of international organisations [8]. This is despite the fact that people have different understandings of legitimacy in different issue areas. However, the transparency and broad participation that comes with democratic processes, the professional support of technocrats, and fair participation and decision-making processes have emerged as important sources of legitimacy. Stephen, on the other hand, explains important sources of legitimacy in terms of legitimacy drift: commitment, evolving standards, maintenance, and changing audiences [9]. The legitimacy of an international organisation declines or is lost when it no longer meets the initial commitments or standards, or when the group does not successfully change to maintain its adaptability, or when the audience of the international organisation changes. Lenz and Viola suggest that international organisations that have been established and maintained in operation for some time, that use 'familiar' organisational models, and that have been influenced and strengthened by the legitimacy of other organisations may be perceived as more legitimate [10]. Politicisation and narratives reinforce or weaken this legitimacy in the process.

Third, legitimacy is based on the notion of confidence, belief, and value. For example, Suchman clearly defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" [11]. Reus-Smit considers legitimacy as an attribute that society assigns to an actor's identity, interests, or practices, or to the norms, rules and principles of an institution [12-13]. When society prescribes such a quality, it can be said that such a thing enjoys or governs legitimacy. When legitimacy is conferred on an actor or institution, we describe it as legitimate. Tallerberg and Zürn

analyse the kernel of political legitimacy from a sociologist's perspective [14]. They argue that legitimacy is a relationship that is determined by the recipient's beliefs and perceptions about the exerciser of power and power. An important source of legitimacy is the belief that power is properly exercised within preestablished institutional environment. Individuals' a priori perceptions of authority and power interact with institutions and behaviour and in the process continually legitimise or de-legitimise the legitimacy of the exercise of power. Macdonald and Macdonald provide a normative interpretation of legitimacy and articulate the role of legitimacy from a statist and cosmopolitan perspective [15]. They argue that criteria of legitimacy are based on special procedures, substance, or non-ideal moral principles. Hurd defines legitimacy as a normative idea about rules or institutions [16-17]. This belief lies between the actor and the institution, defining the actor's perception and influencing the actor's actions. Hurd further analyses the sources of legitimacy from three perspectives: coercion, self-interest and legitimate norms. First, asymmetrical material power relations bring with them the possibility of fear and coercion. Rules in this case are only instruments of the powerful. Thus, power becomes legitimacy itself. Second, self-interest assumes rationality and the quantification and calculation of interests. A rule or relationship is considered 'legitimate' if it brings long-term benefits to the actor. Legitimacy thus enables individuals to act in accordance with their mutual benefits and more complex possibilities for social consensus and less-belligerent progress. Third, legitimacy may also be motivated by intrinsic morality and belief in norms. Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf argue that legitimacy is understood as a combination of material power and the distribution of identity [18]. In this argument, ideologies of what is legitimate must be aligned with the distribution of identities at the elite and popular levels. Keohane, furthermore, proposes six principles of legitimacy: moral acceptability, inclusiveness, epistemic quality, accountability, democratic governance, and positive real gain outcomes [19].

2.3. Research Gap

Literatures provide remarkable definitions of the sources of legitimacy. Nonetheless, the existing literature is not very clear on the path of legitimacy construction, focusing mostly on the analysis of calculations and confidence in material power and interests, and fewer studies have focused on the mechanisms of legitimacy generation and the legitimacy of the global order advocated by China. The next section of this article will explain the way of constructing legitimacy for the global political economic order based the English school of International Relations and show the mechanism of legitimacy construction through the idea of international society based on three most important sources of legitimacy: power, common interests, and value shared.

3. Legitimacy of the English School's Perspective

The global political economic order consists of the material and conceptual dimensions where global actors interact with each other. As Bull remarkably defined that, "a society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions" [20]. Following its definition of the international society, the English school of International Relations shows the mechanism of legitimacy construction based on the two most important sources of legitimacy: common interest and value shared. Common interests explained the interest convergence that focuses on how rationally calculable and substantial material interests generate legitimacy of a world order because its members are either rely on the common gains or incapable of bearing the cost of exit. The value shared emphasizes the important role of conceptual factors such as values, institutions, and beliefs in the process of constructing legitimacy.

Three concepts are wealthy further noting in the English school (see Fig. 1). For one thing, power is defined both by material power such as force and wealth, and conceptual power such as norms, beliefs, and values. On the one hand, the English school acknowledges the idea of power defined by

realists. State-centrism, international anarchy, and the balance of power remain significant in English school's interpretation [21]. On the other hand, the English school also emphasis the version of international society and the classical approach emphasising historical, philosophical, and classic political ideas [22]. The adoption of classical approach has broadened the view of the English school and draw the attention to a sort of primitive constructivism that emphasising value, norms, and social construction.

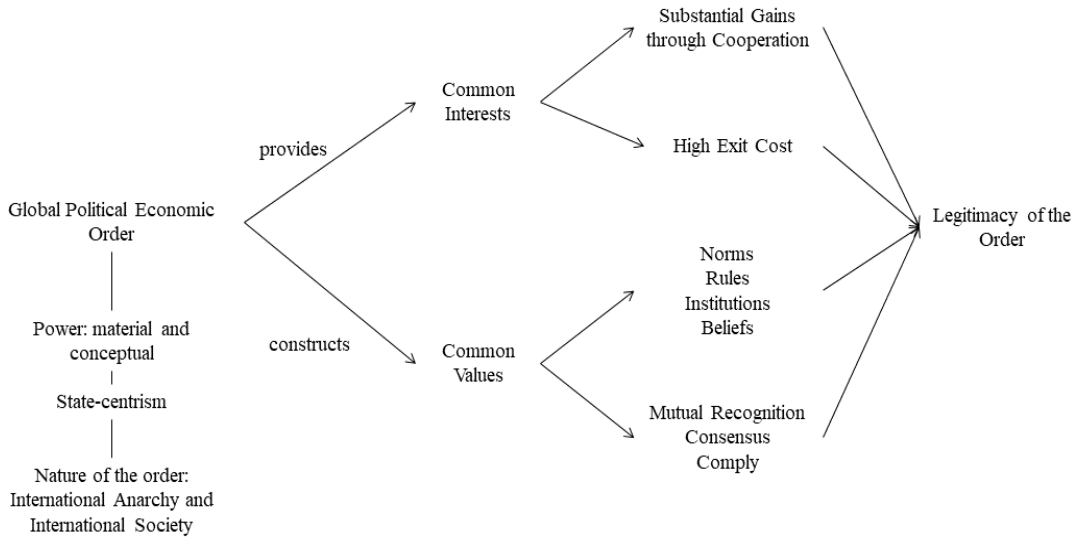


Fig 1. The English School's Perspective of International Legitimacy Construction

Second, followed the neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, the English school viewed state as the key agency of the international and world society because of two reasons. First, English school emphasises the historical approach to interpret current international or world order. Current international system is widely viewed as the consequence of 19th century European modern state system, which albeit Eurocentric, sheds some light on the evolution of current international order. Second, states possess power and attributes that cannot be reduced to its domestic component. Moreover, the principle of sovereignty and the pluralist view of the English school prioritise the stability of order and thus the sovereign principle to encourage coexistence of states and prevent the international society from falling into chaos by interventions in names of humanitarian and ideological causes [23,24].

Third, the nature of the international order is an anarchic international society. in contrast to the static and pessimistic state of war vision of realism, the English school provides a progressing version of the international anarchy, believing that by applying and complying with the common interests and common values that come along with the order, states will gain much better off than in which without such an order [23, 25,26].

3.1. Common Interests

As for common interests produces legitimacy, the English school echoed with rational institutionalism. The legitimacy of the order arises from rationally calculated substantive benefits, co-benefits between actors, and the greater costs of isolation. First, rational institutionalism assumes that international society is a system of multiple actors, with multiple agendas and communication channels, and relies on non-violent means of interaction—a society of complex interdependence [27]. In such society, actors are positioned in a sort of complex relationships in which they interact and influence each other through multiple channels. The free movement of goods, people, technology, capital, and the convergence of interests generate significant economic benefits and lead to changes in domestic governments and international regimes and make intergovernmental alliances possible [26-27]. Further integration of global markets brings greater economic benefits.

Second, the plurality of actors brings the system a multi-issue and multi-agenda character. It is expensive for powerful states to influence agendas through their own military power on the one hand, as in the case of the 'Cod Wars' between the United Kingdom and Iceland. Therefore, powerful states would prefer to use their economic power to influence agenda setting. Weaker states and other actors, on the other hand, can politicise and prioritise some of the issues through linkage strategies. Thus, complex interdependence increases the range of options for policy makers and enhances the space for action for weaker actors through international organisations and non-violent means [27]. Thus, weaker actors also choose to remain in the order because of more options, greater power, and broader bargaining scope, actively acknowledging and increasing the legitimacy of the order.

Third, sensitivity and dependency lead to higher costs of isolation and exit. When a state faces lower costs in responding to external adjustment and in reacting to it, that state is less sensitive and less dependent, and therefore more independent of the order and has more power [27]. But because of the uneven distribution of power, most countries are very sensitive to and dependent on changes in the order. Therefore, adopting an isolationist strategy or quit the current order is not in the toolkit for many states and global actors. This compulsion to remain within an order because of the excessive cost of isolation passively recognises and increases the legitimacy of the order.

3.2. Common Values

The value shared considers legitimacy to be essential beliefs, institutions, norms, rules, and values. In this path, legitimacy arises from the recognition of shared values and common interests, and institutional or norm constructions ensues. Order is not only defined as a substantial condition of international political economy but also generally regarded as a value [28]. This value is reflected in the formation of international society and the designation of international rules by actors, primarily states, in accordance with their recognition and understanding of shared values and common interests. The fact that states are interdependent in terms of material gains leads them to recognise the common interest in complying agreements. The role of rules is to require or authorise prescribed categories of people or groups to act in prescribed ways in order to avoid confusion [28]. The concept of the international community identifies relations between states as those between members of international society who share common rules and comply common system and establishes the minimum norms for their mutual interactions. Rules need to be legitimised by the individuals or groups to which they apply. If members of international society recognise common rules as valid or accept the underlining or presupposed values of common rules, common rules are thus legitimate. Thus, an important method of legitimation is to have them recognised and supported by international actors in international activities, such as international organisations and international conferences [28]. Bull's interpretation of order and the international community thus emphasise the common good and shared values, as well as a sense of commonality in terms of legal and moral rules. Recognition and compliance are important sources of legitimacy. At the same time, Bull also gives special consideration to the great powers, or actors with more superior material power, because the great powers contribute to the international order via managing their relations with each other and by using their advantages for the benefit of the international community as a whole [29]. Powers that successfully manage their relations with each other, discipline their own behaviour, and use their advantages to create greater benefits for the international community as a whole are therefore more likely to have more legitimacy.

4. "Belt and Road" Initiative: The Legitimacy Challenge

As a rising power, China is considered to be a great power in the international order since its influence and material capability grow. The most striking sign of China's material rise can be portrayed by several economic milestones in the last two decades: China became the top exporter in 2009; China surpassed Japan and became the world's second largest economy in 2010, the great trading and manufactory nation after 2013... China's rapid material recovery and economic boost

have led the analysts and policy officials in the region and the international society recognise Beijing as one of the global great powers [30]. However, rising and great power status does not mean that China's effort to participate in the construction of the world order is without resistance. The greatest resistance to China's alternative, parallel, or complementary efforts in the incumbent global order stems from the lack of legitimacy of the order China advocates. Taking the "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI) as an example. China formally initiated the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st World Maritime Silk Road in the end of 2013. This ambitious initiative has vastly crossed three continents, established eight economic corridors, and been accepted by more than 100 states and international organisations [31-32]. The initiative alleged to promote economic prosperity, poverty reduction, infrastructure construction, connectivity, openness, innovation, sustainable development, governance, and so forth [31, 33]. Nevertheless, two groups of legitimate challenges—performance challenges and value challenges—have remained significant challenges.

4.1. Performance Challenge

The performance challenge mainly questions the purpose, mechanism, and performance of the BRI. First, the BRI is suspected of being a projection of China's own political and economic security strategy in the wider region even though the BRI states that its mission is to improve infrastructure and (inter)regional connectivity, provide much-needed global public goods such as infrastructure investment, technology, products, and thereby promote development and economic growth [34]. The BRI spans three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe, and has generated other institutional and cooperative frameworks to contribute to socio-economic and institutional development [35]. Massive investments in intra- and extra-regional construction offered the possibility for China to strengthen its control over the region and build a strong navy. This argument culminates in the so-called 'China threat narrative', whereby China is bound to become a new imperialist state in the 21st century and to base its gains and development at the expanses of the losses of the wider region through its own power and order construction.

Second, the BRI charts a positive and ambitious course, but the implementation of its projects has been slow, and its real performance remains to be proven. In the case of the Philippines, despite the lengthy sovereignty dispute between the Philippines and China over the South China Sea disbutes, the Philippines changed its stance on the BRI during the Duterte presidency and moved towards active cooperation with China. However, few BRI projects in the Philippines have actually been implemented, let alone completed, so that both the alleged benefits and the concerns, criticisms and risks seem to be largely speculative rather than based on actual developments [36]. Moreover, the competition between domestic political elites, their political preference may also slow the BRI's implement. In the case of Thailand, Prime Minister Yingluck and Prayuth competed for domestic legitimacy in governing the country, attempted to prioritise the BRI's construction programmes in their constituencies, and thus gaining legitimacy from remarkable economic performance [37]. This raises the question to coordinate legitimacy construction of multiple levels. In the Thailand case, the legitimacy of unit level is acquired at the expenses of the system-level legitimacy. BRI paid price for domestic power bargaining and yet diminished its own legitimacy in questions of its true potential.

In addition, many countries and regions covered by the BRI are facing serious security, economic development, environmental, and social problems. The success of the BRI depends on its performance in addressing these issues and the attitudes that people in these regions. For example, China has combined the outcomes of the BRI with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to contribute to local poverty reduction and sustainable development by exporting infrastructure development, investment, knowledge, technical support, and governance experience to less developed countries and regions [38]. As the source of legitimacy based on rationally calculated benefits suggests, the legitimacy of the BRI will only be recognised and enhanced if it can provide stable and sustainable material benefits to actors in the region.

Therefore, as the initiator of the BRI, China should continue to build the legitimacy of the global order it advocates through the public goods provided and interest convergence path in order to meet

the legitimacy challenge from the performance side. At the same time, China also needs to pay attention to the democratic process and equity issues in the Belt and Road Initiative. The transparency, information and decision-making that democratic processes bring can better discipline the participants in the Belt and Road Initiative, including China, and guarantee fairness in the Belt and Road framework [6, 8].

4.2. Value Challenge

The value challenge of legitimacy is also a trek that China must face in order to participate in the construction of the global order. The value challenge here comes from three main sources: 1) contestation with the current global political economic order, 2) lack of recognition by other major powers in the global political economic order, and 3) value commitments and consistency. First, the BRI is seen as China's way of balancing United States' (US) world dominance and competition with the US-led liberal order [39-40]. The major powers establish and endorse regimes with rules, principles, and institutions that reflect their substantial interests, and the minor powers confer legitimacy or voluntary compliance as long as these rules and principles also serve the interests of the minor powers. According to Gilpin's theory of the uneven distribution of power and development, a rising power would be less willing to comply with the established order and attempt to change the international system in accordance with its particular interests [41]. In another word, all rising powers are 'revisionist' powers to the extant system [40]. Thus, the BRI, in the form of non-military security and through economic construction, demonstrates China's desire to build an international order that is more in accordance with its own interests and that is acceptable to both regional powers and other countries, especially avoiding intricating US security concerns immediately [42]. This will depend on the perceptions and value judgements of the BRI by the great and regional powers and other countries, as the interests are also only a perception based on the identity and interaction of the actors [43].

Second, the BRI lacks recognition by other major powers in the current global political economic order. China has pledged that the BRI will strengthen relations among its members through bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral cooperation and continue to promote sustainable development and the building of a shared human future. However, the US, as a unipolar global power, refuses to participate in the initiative and sees the BRI as a revised challenge to its dominant global political economic order. Moreover, although over 100 countries and international organisations have joined the BRI, and over 50 of them have signed cooperation agreements with China, none of the traditional political and economic powers in the BRI's sphere have joined it directly [32]. This poses a further challenge to the legitimacy of the BRI.

Moreover, the potential conflict between the value pledged and China's own national interests has also led to challenges to the legitimacy of the BRI. China upholds its concept of "peaceful rise" to development, adheres to the concept of sovereignty, advocates building a community of shared human destiny and future, and promotes common development and prosperity for all countries [40]. These value commitments can appeal to many of the disadvantaged countries in the current order. However, when there is a conflict between the development of the BRI and China's own national interests, especially when the two sides in conflict are extremely unequal in terms of material power, the BRI may lose legitimacy by reneging on its commitments [9]. In the case of Vietnam, for example, although Vietnam actively participates in the BRI and sees it as an important mechanism to support Sino-Vietnam relations and regional economic conditions, this does not allay Vietnam's potential territorial, security, and strategic concerns of the China's rise [44]. At present, China and Vietnam are actively cooperating under the framework of the BRI, which provides a source of legitimacy for its implementation. However, more careful verification of the value commitment and consistency of the future BRI is needed. In addition, Allan, Vucetic, and Hopf also find that the values proposed by China may not attract other powers to believe in the alternative or complementary order proposed by China [18]. Nationalised, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', 'rejuvenation', 'Chinese dream' and other discourses and narratives centred on the Chinese Communist Party may play an important

role in the domestic propaganda of such values. But they do not convince the rest of the global actors why these values are beneficial to the global order and other actors.

Therefore, China also needs to cautiously adopt the value convergence path, define and establish common value and common interests that are beneficial for all actors in the world order, and propose corresponding rules and institutions to materially realise and guarantee these values and interests. China should also focus on great power management and self-restraint. Moreover, China can promote and maintain a more stable order through great power coordination with different great or regional powers, gaining top-down legitimacy while gaining recognition from these powers on the one hand. Self-restraint of China is a strategic recommitment to the coherence of the order and values it advocated in order to gain further bottom-up, voluntary, non-violent recognition and legitimacy on the other. China thus ought to pay more attention on nuanced construction and communication of order it advocates.

5. Conclusion

Focusing the legitimacy of the global political economic order and the ways in which it is constructed, this article first found that three factors - coercion based on material power, rationally calculated interests, and conceptual factors such as beliefs, institutions, norms, rules, and values - constitute important sources of legitimacy. It is worth noting that these three sources do not often appear purely and solely in the construction of a particular legitimacy, but usually in a mixture. Then, this article proposes the paths for constructing the legitimacy of the global political economic order based on these three sources. Common interests and values shared construct and shape the legitimacy of a global order. Finally, the historical institutional approach suggests that when an institution generates long-term positive gains or is defended by dominant actors, it generates a passive legitimacy that is self-enforcing in response to positive gains or defensive actions. As a new rising power, how China confronts the current global order and participates in the construction of the future global order will be a long-term and far-reaching research topic. The article concludes that, in addition to growing in power, China also needs to consider how to gain more legitimacy for its proposed alternative, parallel, or complementary order to the extant global order. In this regard, researchers and academics can still make deeper and more detailed observations and analyses.

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