



TAKSHASHILA
INSTITUTION

CHINA'S VISION FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER: GDI, GSI & GCI



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment argues that the Chinese leadership's proposal to build a community of common destiny for mankind presents an alternative vision for the world order. In order to achieve this objective, Beijing is seeking to bring about fundamental institutional and normative changes to global governance. It is within this context that Chinese President Xi Jinping has launched the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI).

Analysing the speeches by Chinese leaders, policy publications, media and analytical discourse in China, along with actual policy decisions, this assessment provides a SWOT analysis of current geopolitical churn from Beijing's perspective. It then places the launch of GDI, GSI and GCI within this context, before detailing the elements of each initiative and distilling their stated and implicit agenda.

The assessment concludes that the launch of these initiatives presages a far more proactive foreign policy approach by Beijing. Through GDI, GSI and GCI, the Chinese leadership hopes to shape an external environment that not only ensures regime security but is also favourable for China's development and security interests. In doing so, however, it is reshaping key norms of global governance towards a fundamentally illiberal direction.

I. UNDERPINNINGS OF WORLD ORDER

- A** THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
- B** A PRACTICIONER'S ASSESSMENT
- C** KEY DEFINITIONS
- D** WHAT GREAT POWERS DESIRE

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WORLD ORDER

What exactly is a world order? Thinkers, scholars and practitioners have historically sought to answer this question from different perspectives:

REALISTS:

tend to view order from the perspective of political and military balance of power. States are the primary actors within this conception, navigating immutable anarchy, managing conflict and seeking cooperation through shifting balances in power. Power, in this conception, is the primary currency of international relations.

LIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISTS:

emphasise institutions, agreements, treaties and regimes that regulate various aspects of international relations and global governance. While states remain the primary actors, their behaviour is mediated through an institutional architecture that manages conflicts, facilitates communications and provides a framework for cooperation. This, in turn, endows these institutions with personality, interests and agency.

CONSTRUCTIVISTS:

extend the debate beyond material factors, stressing on the role of ideas, norms, identities, discourse, values and shared understandings. Anarchy, as Alexander Wendt argued, is mediated by ideas, norms, and practices, which are shaped by and, in turn, shape states' identities and interests. In other words, norms have a constitutive impact on the behaviour of states.

B WORLD ORDER: A PRACTITIONER'S ASSESSMENT

Veteran American diplomat Henry Kissinger's framework defining world order provides a practitioner's perspective, involving elements from these different schools of thought.

He defines the concept of a world order as being about "the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power." This system, he adds, is based on two components, i.e., legitimacy and power. The former represents "a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action," the latter "enforces restraint where rules break down." This study builds on this framework.



C KEY CONCEPTS

1 POWER

Power is defined as the ability of a state to achieve its objectives, regardless of the opposition. This entails the ability to deter, compel, persuade and coerce in order to ensure desired behaviour by other actors. In other words, power is a means to an end, comprising several instruments within a state's toolkit.

2 LEGITIMACY

This can be understood as popular acceptance of the righteousness of ideas, rules, institutions, interests and actors. This can be explicit or implicit, and is a product of acceptance and perceptions of others of one as being correct and proper. In the international system, States seek legitimacy for their propositions, systems of governance, interests, aspirations and actions. Generating legitimacy entails establishing shared norms, rules and institutions and popularising them by engaging in narrative/discourse contestation.

3 AUTHORITY

This study understands authority as lying at the intersection of power and legitimacy. It is defined as the exercise of power which is not considered as being coercion but as legitimate. Authority, thereby, is critical for a state to fashion an order. This is precisely what great/major powers desire, as they seek to further their interests and shape the behaviour of other actors within the system.

C KEY CONCEPTS

4 NORMS

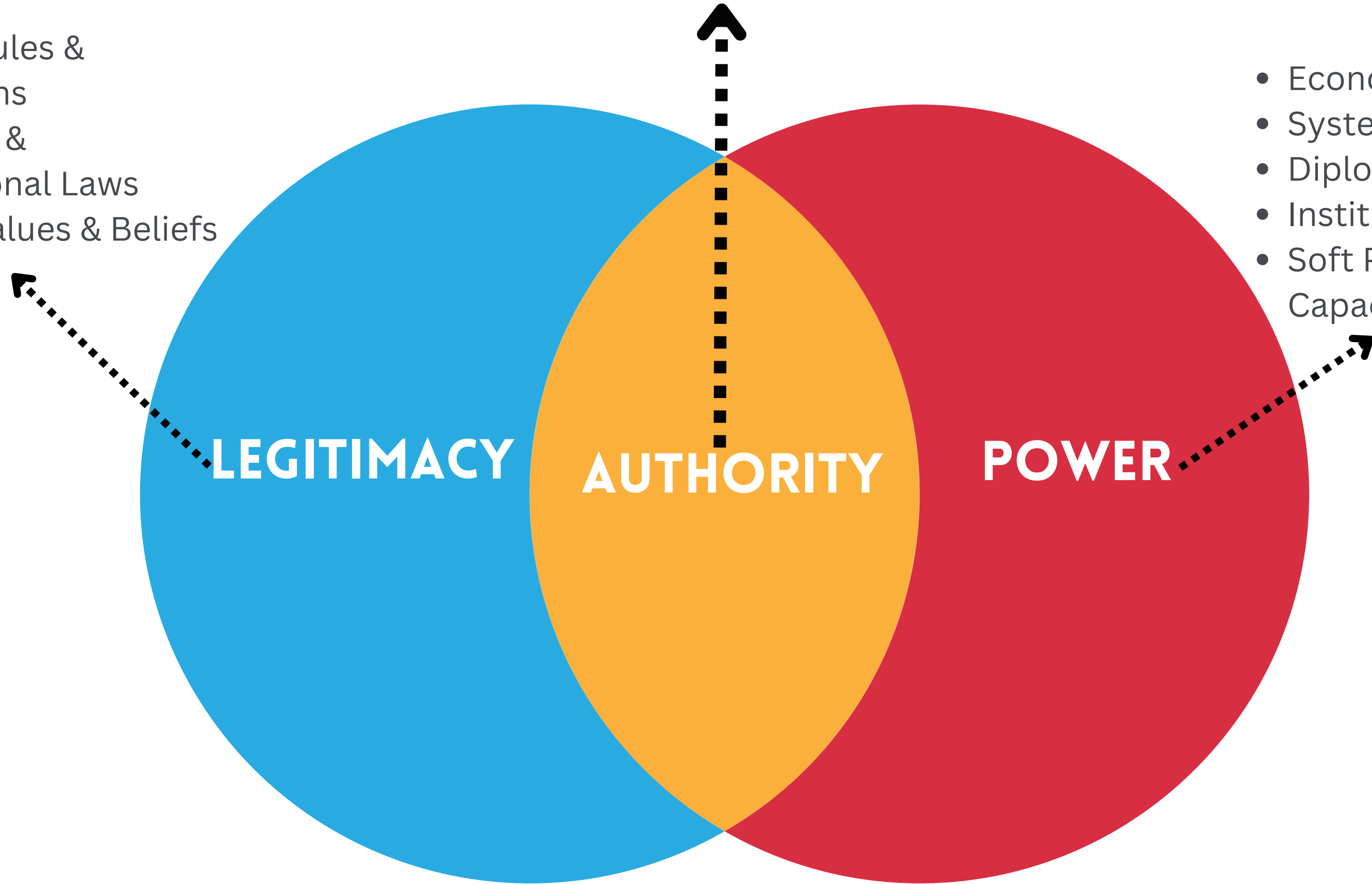
In liberal-constructivist literature, norms are conventionally defined as collective, intersubjectively shared expectations of behaviour. They provide standards of behaviour for a group of actors who share a common identity. Global norms define the behaviours that are expected by members of the international community and those that are prohibited. In that sense, they legitimise certain actions while delegitimising others. Adherence to norms by states, however, need not imply incongruence with the pursuit of interests.

5 NORM ENTREPRENEUR

This assessment defines norm entrepreneurs as states that set out to change the existing normative context of the regional or international order and seek to alter the behaviour of others in adherence to their normative preference. This effort entails a series of actions, including but not limited to, advocacy, persuasion, experience sharing leading to norm diffusion and socialisation. When a critical mass of actors accede to the legitimacy of the proposed norm, it leads to a norm cascade, thereby redefining perceptions of appropriate behaviour for actors. The final stage of this process is norm internalisation.

D WHAT GREAT POWERS DESIRE

- Norms, Rules & Institutions
- Domestic & International Laws
- Shared Values & Beliefs



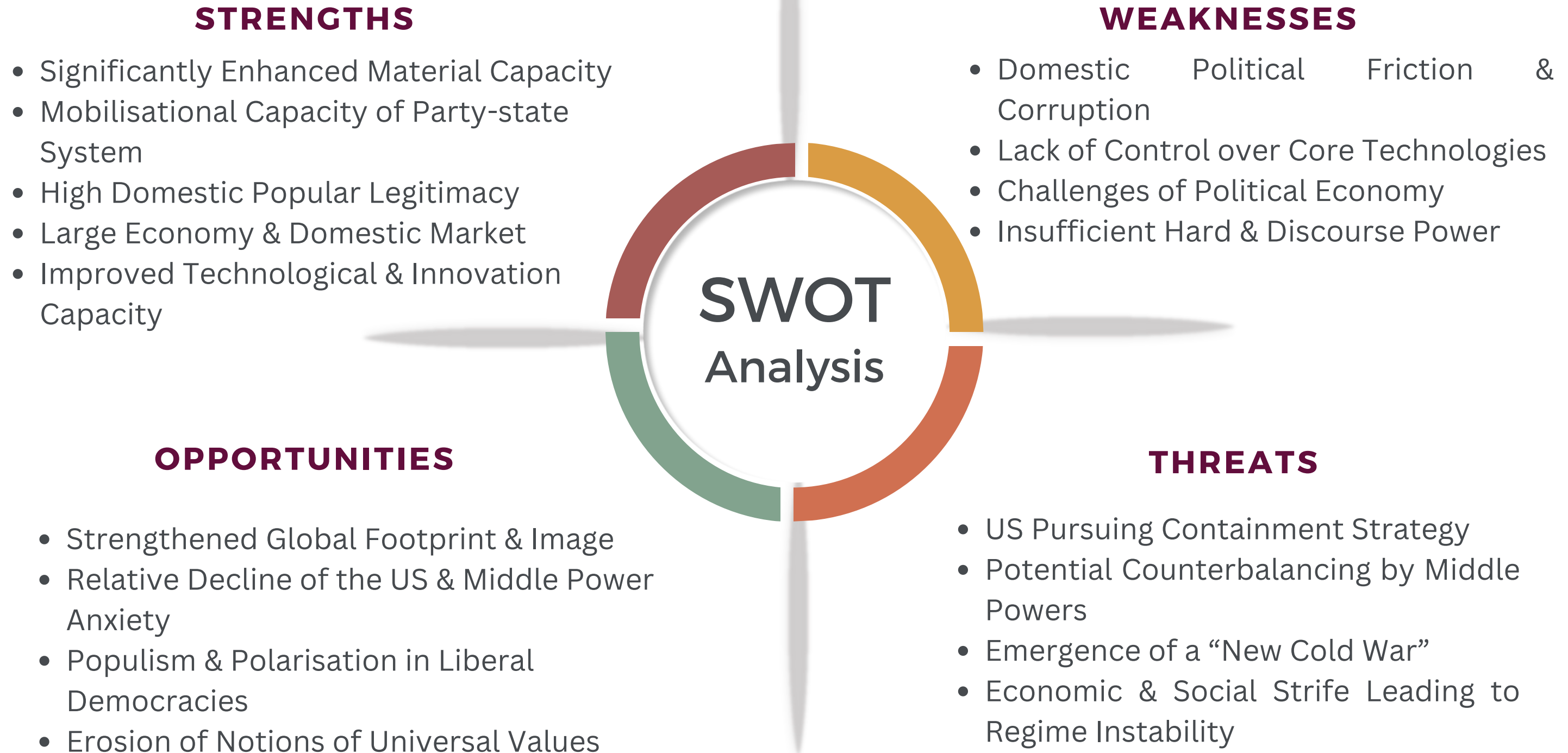
- Economic & Military Capacity
- Systemic Resilience
- Diplomatic Capacity
- Institutional Presence
- Soft Power & Discourse Capacity

II. CHINESE LEADERSHIP'S WORLDVIEW

Based on the speeches by Chinese leaders, policy publications and media and analytical discourse in China, the broad worldview of the Chinese leadership can be distilled as follows:

- **Shifting Balance of Power:** The Chinese leadership increasingly views the world as undergoing profound and turbulent changes. While the West continues to enjoy advantages, the geopolitical and geoeconomic balance of power is shifting toward the East. China today enjoys significant strategic opportunities but also faces increasing risks and challenges in pursuing national rejuvenation and emerging as a global power.
- **Four Deficits:** In his speeches, Xi Jinping has repeatedly characterised the world as being plagued by the four deficits of development, peace, governance and trust. Chinese foreign policy responses and normative interventions to reshape global governance norms to suit Chinese interests have been calibrated within this framework.
- **Self-reliance vs Engagement:** This appears to be a persistent debate in Chinese foreign policy circles. Amid an increasingly hostile external environment, particularly with concerns around the US pursuing a policy of containment, there have been persistent calls to pursue self-reliance as a strategic objective. Yet, it is also evident that China's prosperity and future growth is linked to deeper economic and political engagement with the outside world.

SWOT ANALYSIS FROM CHINA'S PERSPECTIVE

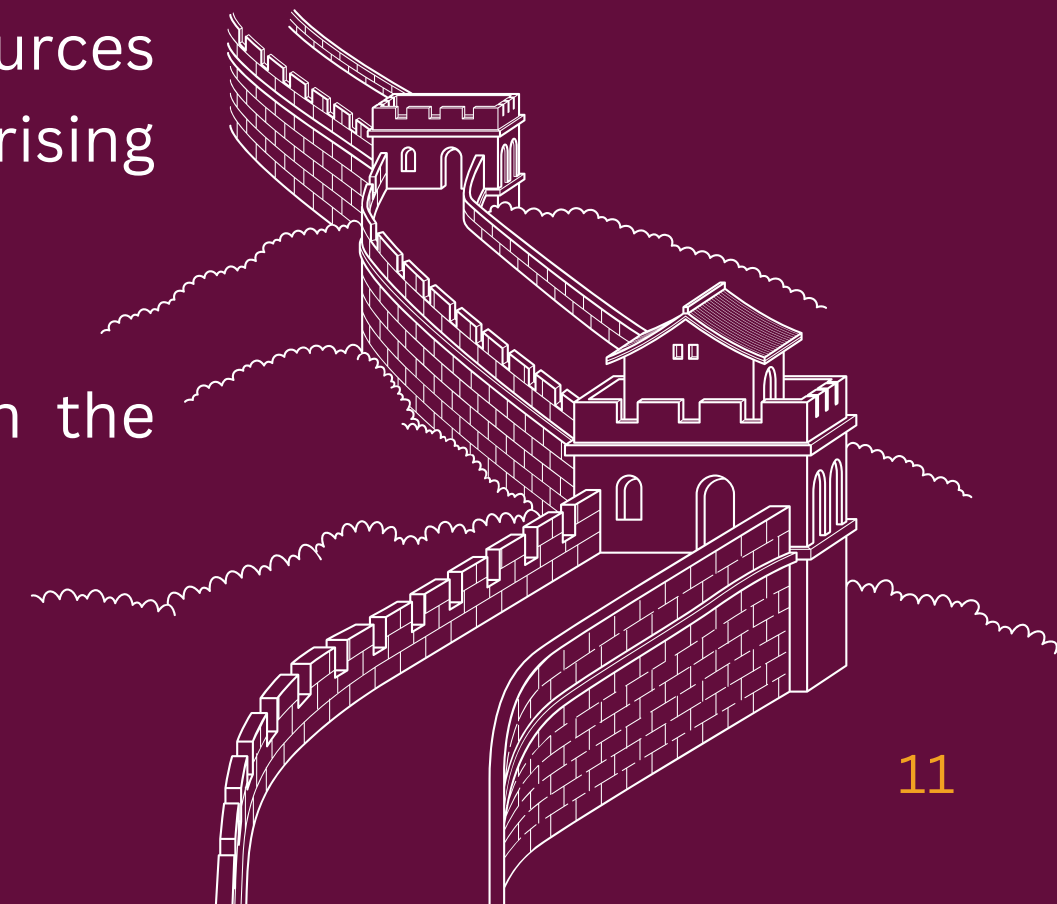


III. CHINA'S NORMATIVE PROPOSITION

With the above context, we now examine the People's Republic of China's quest for authority, as it rises to great power status. There exists already a substantial body of ever-expanding literature on the Chinese leadership's investments in different sources of power. However, Beijing's attempts to expand normative influence and discourse power remain insufficiently studied and poorly understood.

One key reason for this is that Chinese narratives about reshaping global governance and normative initiatives to this effect have evolved gradually as its power and state capacity have expanded. Consequently, while some concepts and ideas may have long been articulated, it is only very recently that they have been imbued with substance, resources and deeper narrative coherence. In that sense, China today is emerging as not just a rising power but also an aggressive norm entrepreneur.

The key normative shift that the Chinese leadership has called for is captured in the concept of the Community of Common Destiny for Mankind 人类命运共同体.



COMMUNITY OF COMMON DESTINY FOR MANKIND

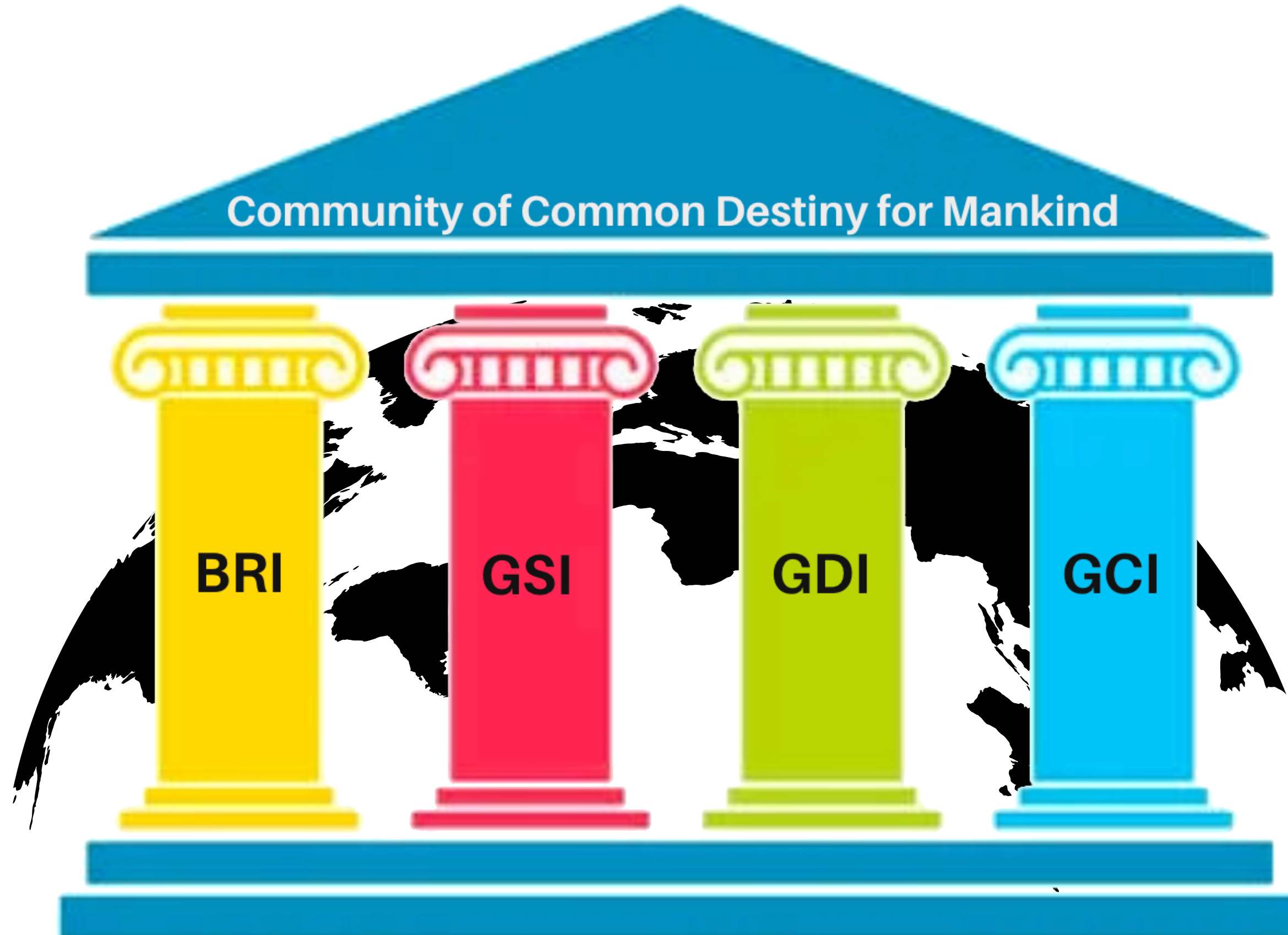
The usage of this expression in Chinese discourse can be traced back to 2007. It was also referenced in Hu Jintao's report to the 18th Party Congress. But it acquired greater salience after Xi Jinping used it in a speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 2013. Within Chinese discourse, gradually, the phrase began to shift from being a description of the interconnected nature of the world to representing the idea of a more proactive Chinese foreign policy.

Over the years, Chinese analysts and policymakers have argued that this concept not only represents an “inevitable requirement for countries to meet global challenges in a world of interdependence” but also “transcends Western international relations theories,” “points the right direction for the improvement of global governance,” and is key to building a new type of international relations.

It is within this framework that the Chinese leadership has now located its flagship foreign policy efforts, the ***Belt and Road Initiative***, the ***Global Development Initiative***, ***Global Security Initiative***, and the ***Global Civilisation Initiative***. These, it argues, embody Chinese wisdom and solutions for the deficits facing the world. The new Law on Foreign Relations of the PRC passed in June 2023 makes building a community of common destiny for mankind a legal imperative.



IV. UNPACKING GDI, GSI & GCI



01 GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (GDI)

The Global Development Initiative was proposed by Xi Jinping at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2021. He has linked GDI with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In proposing GDI, Xi called for placing “development high on the global macro policy agenda” and for fostering “global development partnerships that are more equal and balanced.”

Nearly 100 countries and international organisations have expressed support for the Initiative, and 70 countries have joined the ‘Group of Friends’ of GDI at the UN. The execution of GDI is unlike BRI in terms of project scope, scale and funding. Projects cover domains of poverty reduction, food security, pandemic and vaccines, climate change, industrialisation, digital economy, digital connectivity and development finance.

GDI's implementation is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But it entails Chinese agencies partnering with established multinational institutions for implementation. In addition, GDI seeks to establish new institutions and forums. Funding for these primarily comes from the Chinese government.

GDI IN NUMBERS

- ✓ 50 projects announced in September 2022
- ✓ Project pool at 100, covering 40 countries
- ✓ 1,000 capacity building projects launched
- ✓ 20,000 training opportunities offered
- ✓ 32 Deliverables at High-level Dialogue on Global Development

KEY NORMATIVE UNDERPINNINGS OF GDI

- Positioning China as partner that prioritises development and engages in constructive ***multilateralism as opposed to unilateralism***, zero-sum games and self-interest
- Emphasising on ***development as a human rights priority*** as opposed to civil & political rights
- Stressing on ***China as benevolent champion of the “special needs” of developing countries***, including debt suspension and development aid
- Pushing back against the US in terms of the technological competition, while ***arguing for an open, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory science and technology development environment***
- Calling for a ***transition to a green & low-carbon economy*** in order to boost China’s economic footprint in related sectors globally and undercut criticism of China’s development
- Stressing ***linkages between development and security***; one cannot exist without the other

IMPLICIT OBJECTIVES OF GDI

- A** BOLSTERING REGIME LEGITIMACY
- B** ENHANCING DISCOURSE & SHAPING POWER
- C** RE-BOOTING CHINA'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY
- D** EXPANDING DEVELOPMENT SPACE



BOLSTERING REGIME LEGITIMACY

Ensuring regime stability and survival is a core objective of the policies of the Communist Party of China (CCP). This requires nurturing governance legitimacy among the Chinese public.

It is a misnomer that the the Party-state system merely draws legitimacy based on the economic achievements of China over the past four decades. In fact, considerable energy is regularly spent to cultivate a narrative of the CCP as a uniquely-qualified liberator and able inheritor of an ancient civilisation.

Foreign policy also plays a key role in bolstering regime legitimacy, by positioning China under the CCP as a re-emerging power, a morally righteous actor and a major power that is unselfish in sharing its developmental achievements and experiences. In this context, it is noteworthy that GDI discourse adopts phrases -- like people-centered, results-oriented projects, and addressing unbalanced and inadequate development -- from China's domestic policy discourse.



ENHANCING DISCOURSE & SHAPING POWER

Under Xi Jinping, a key objective of Chinese diplomacy has been for the country to not just become a global leader in terms of composite national strength but also international influence.

In order to achieve this, Chinese scholars and analysts have argued that it is critical for Beijing contest the universality of what they see as Western values and have called for the propagation of a Chinese model.

Through GDI, Beijing is seeking to deepen “policy dialogue and strategic synergy with UN development agencies”; establish new forums like the Global Development Promotion Center Network; and strengthen China's standing as a major power that is prioritising development, building capacity and sharing experiences.



RE-BOOTING CHINA'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Over the past decade, China's economic diplomacy has come under increasing flak at home and abroad.

Domestically, a cooling economy and weak returns on external investment have diminished the appetite for big-ticket projects and lending. Meanwhile, internationally, BRI projects have been criticised for being economically unviable, extractive, environmental damaging and engendering financial and political risks.

Through the GDI and specifically by focussing on capacity building and experience sharing, Beijing is looking to rebrand and re-boot its economic diplomacy, positioning itself as a preferred development partner for the Global South that can do more than simply build infrastructure.



EXPANDING DEVELOPMENT SPACE

From the perspective of the Chinese leadership, the world order is undergoing “drastic changes”, presenting enormous challenges for China's future growth and development. In his speech at the 20th Party Congress, Xi warned about the threats of “external attempts to blackmail, contain, blockade, and exert maximum pressure”. At the same time, he has argued that “China's development cannot be realised without the participation of the world.”

This dilemma requires Beijing to pursue a more proactive foreign policy of courting new partners to democratise international affairs and diversifying its economic engagement.

Since Beijing believes that development and security are dialectically linked, GDI is key to shape a favourable external environment for China's rise.

02 GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE (GSI)

Chinese President Xi Jinping launched the Global Security Initiative in a speech at the Boao Forum for Asia in April 2022. In it, he outlined six core principles or commitments of GSI. Subsequently, in February 2023, the Chinese government issued a GSI Concept Paper, which reiterated the six commitments, and outlined 20 cooperation priorities and 5 platforms and mechanisms. As per the paper, GSI brings together current Chinese security policy measures across domains under one rhetorical umbrella, and hints at more proactive security engagement with the world.

However, unlike GDI, GSI remains nebulous and does not comprise a formal ‘Group of Friends’. Instead, China says that over 90 countries and regional organisations have expressed “appreciation and support” for it. This is likely by design since GSI is pitched the panacea to “Cold War mentality” and bloc confrontation. Creating a formal institution would run counter to that objective. The absence of a singular, formal GSI mechanism is likely also a reflection of the hesitations of developing countries.

Consequently, under GSI, Beijing is looking to leverage bilateral ties and platforms like BRICS, SCO, CICA, etc, along with establishing new mechanisms to build consensus on issues of security governance.

COMMITMENTS OF GSI

- ✓ Pursue common, comprehensive, cooperative & sustainable security
- ✓ Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity
- ✓ Abide by UN Charter & true multilateralism
- ✓ Take seriously legitimate security concerns of all; adhere to indivisible security concept
- ✓ Peaceful resolution of disputes; no abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction
- ✓ Traditional and non-traditional security threats are intertwined

KEY NORMATIVE UNDERPINNINGS OF GSI

- ▶ ***Undermining the idea of “collective security” as a Cold War relic*** while proposing the rather vague concept of “***common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security***”
- ▶ Proposing ***the principle of indivisible security***, i.e., indivisibility between individual and common security, between traditional and non-traditional security, between security rights and obligations, and between security and development
- ▶ Emphasising ***sovereign independence, inviolability of territorial integrity & equality of states along with the right to independently choose social systems and development paths***
- ▶ Stressing on ***development as a key tool for the political resolution of conflict***, arguing that it eliminates the breeding ground for insecurity
- ▶ ***Decrying the concept of a rules-based order while calling on states to adhere to true multilateralism and the UN-centered system***, while strengthening China’s influence in multilateral institutions through broader coalitions of developing countries
- ▶ ***Deligitimising use of economic securitisation & coercion by the US-led West*** while actively securitising Chinese economic engagement with the world and establishing coercive instruments

IMPLICIT OBJECTIVES OF GSI

- A** UNDERMINING US' SECURITY POLICIES
- B** POSITIONING CHINA AS A RESPONSIBLE POWER
- C** SECURITISATION OF ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT
- D** ENGAGEMENT WITH HOTSPOT ISSUES
- E** SHAPING NORMS VIA NEW MINILATERALS
- F** INTENSIFIED DEFENSE & LAW-ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

A UNDERMINING US SECURITY POLICIES

GSI argues that “humanity is an indivisible security community” and pushes back against “Cold War mentality, unilateralism, bloc confrontation and hegemonism.” The Concept Paper says that instead, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter are the “humanity’s institutional design for collective security and lasting peace.”

In their interpretations Chinese diplomats and scholars have juxtaposed the concept of indivisible security with the concept of Collective Security via security blocs, decrying the latter as a product of Cold War mentality, resulting in bloc confrontation. Instead, GSI calls for “taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously” and building a “balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, so as to realize universal security and common security.”

In this context, Chinese policymakers and analysts have also described the US’ Indo-Pacific Strategy as an effort at containing China’s rise by bloc formation in Asia. This narrative is an effort to dissuade Asian countries from closer security alignment with the US and building a new security architecture in Asia suited to Chinese interests.

B POSITIONING CHINA AS A RESPONSIBLE POWER

A key aspect of GSI is to project China as a responsible major power that is invested in upholding the UN-centered international order and is offering a more participatory, multilateral approach to reforming global security governance. This narrative is often accompanied by criticism of the idea of the “rules-based order” being articulated by the US as fundamentally exclusionary.

C SECURITISATION OF ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT

GSI marks a much more purposeful effort towards greater securitisation of China's economic engagement with the world. This is not a unique objective. In many ways, it mirrors the policy discourse in the West on de-risking, resilience, and decoupling vis-a-vis China.

Maintaining stable and smooth supply and industrial chains, safeguarding food and energy security, countering unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, and data security all find mention within the ambit of GSI.

There is already significant evidence of the impact of this through Beijing's expanding effort to trade in local currencies, diversification of China's export markets, changes to anti-espionage and data security laws, adoption of new instruments to counter Western sanctions and shifts in energy and agriculture policies.

D ENGAGEMENT WITH HOTSPOT ISSUES

GSI is evidently resulting in greater Chinese military and security diplomacy across the developing world. Beijing has hailed its role in brokering the Iran-Saudi detente in 2023 as an example of the successful practice of GSI.

In articulating GSI, China is indicating a willingness to play a more proactive role in addressing hotspot issues around the world. This appears to be the product of a recognition of China's expanded overseas interests in a world that is not a tranquil place and the increasing volatility along China's periphery.

However, given the history of China's conflict resolution diplomacy, whether in the Korean Peninsula, the Horn of Africa, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, around the Ukraine war or on the Rohingya issue, it appears unlikely that Beijing will be willing to commit force to underwrite peace deals.

E SHAPING NORMS VIA NEW MINILATERALS

Under GSI, it is evident that China is looking to bolster global support for its propositions on global security norms.

The Concept Paper mentions areas like nuclear security, biosecurity, human rights, terrorism and cyberspace, along with what Beijing calls “new frontiers”, such as deep sea, polar regions, outer space, digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

Leveraging the minilateral cooperation platforms discussed identified under GSI, China hopes to arrive at to arrive at common understandings over norms and mobilise larger numbers of developing countries to then shape global security governance within the UN framework in line with Chinese interests.

F INTENSIFIED DEFENSE & LAW-ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

Under GSI, Beijing is likely to pursue more proactive defense and law-enforcement cooperation. China is among the leading arms exporters. For the 2018-2022 period, it ranked fourth among global arms exporters, accounting for 5.2% of the market. Since the announcement of GSI, joint statements with Central Asian and African countries have included specific references to defense cooperation around infrastructure, training, education and equipment.

Likewise, law-enforcement cooperation is emerging as a key aspect of GSI. This covers issues ranging from piracy, trafficking, cross-border Internet crimes, policing and coastguard cooperation and training, etc. China has also committed to train 5,000 professionals from developing countries to address global security issues. Such practical cooperation lends Beijing greater policy sway and allows protecting its overseas interests.

03 GLOBAL CIVILISATION INITIATIVE (GCI)

The Global Civilisation Initiative was launched by Xi Jinping during a speech at a dialogue forum between the CCP and World Political Parties in March 2023. Theoretically, GCI is China's solution to the deficit of trust that is plaguing the world. To do so, GCI proposes that the diversity of human civilisation is a basic feature of the world and the source of human progress, and that this diversity must be respected while seeking dialogue, interaction and learning among civilisations.

At present, the GCI too does not seem to have a formal structure or group that brings together countries, like the Friends of GDI at the UN. Rather, it is a nebulous concept under which Beijing is calling for promoting dialogue between civilisations as opposed in a world that is experiencing turbulence and ideological divisions.

This appears to be a deliberate choice, as the implicit objective of GCI is to influence patterns of thought rather than implementing specific projects. That said, there are specific projects related to cultural heritage preservation, people-to-people connectivity, education, art, literature, archeology, media and tourism that have been classified under the ambit of GCI.

FOUR PILLARS OF GCI

- ✓ Respect for the diversity of civilisations; pursue dialogue and coexistence and not estrangement and clashes
- ✓ Advocates for common values of humanity, with value connotations defined from a civilisational prism
- ✓ Calls to pursue inheritance and innovation of civilisations
- ✓ Advocates for robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation

KEY NORMATIVE UNDERPININGS OF GCI

- Arguing that *modernisation is not westernisation* and calling for *upholding the principle of independence to explore diversified paths towards modernisation* based on one's cultural heritage and actual national conditions
- Proposing the *common values of mankind*, i.e., peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, as opposed to universality of values; and appreciating the perceptions of these values by different civilizations
- Arguing that there is *no one-size-fits-all model for promoting and protecting human rights*; this must be based on historical, specific and practical contexts. But *rights to subsistence and development are the basic human rights of "paramount importance"*
- Articulating a *state-centric perspective* as opposed to an individual-centric view with regard to the values that inform governance.
- Emphasis on *equality of states, inviolability of state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs*
- Stressing on the importance of *creative transformation and innovative development* of traditional cultures

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GCI'S AGENDA

On the surface, the worldview articulated under GCI, i.e., of respecting the diversity of civilisations and appreciating civilisational interpretations of common values of mankind, appears to be rather benign. However, the principles that underpin this initiative can result in regression in civil and political rights of individuals around the world, while strengthening reactionary, regressive and autocratic regimes and practices.

As argued earlier, the implicit objective of GCI is to engender certain mindset changes with the goal of reducing external ideological pressures on the rule of the Communist Party. These changes to the normative mental model around values of governance that GCI seeks to bring about are:

- A** First, GCI applies a civilisational frame to governance values and the norm of state sovereignty. It also emphasises the particularity of human rights. Such a shift globally could lend legitimacy to regressive and discriminatory cultural practices under the garb of cultural inheritances. By doubling down on the principle of state sovereignty, it also limits the tools at the international community's disposal to counter gross violations of individual rights.
- B** Second, GCI applies a state-centric lens to the global discourse on governance values and rights. In doing so, it places state and to a certain degree community interests over individual interests. This portends a fundamental shift potentially eroding decades of progress in advancing individual rights.
- C** Third, GCI conflates liberal values with Westernisation, thereby adding a geopolitical tinge to liberal perspectives on political, civil, social and economic rights, and undermining them under the guise of respecting diversity.

V. CONCLUSION

This assessment has detailed the comprehensive nature of the challenge that GDI, GSI and GCI present to the future evolution of the world order and liberal norms. It is, thus, imperative for liberal democracies to devise appropriate policy responses.

However, responding to what is a purposeful normative intervention from Beijing, backed by significant material capabilities, requires a holistic approach. It also requires understanding the interests of large parts of the developing world and what it is that they find attractive about China's propositions.

The response by liberal democracies, therefore, must entail a well-thoughtout approach rather than ideological hectoring and Cold-War-style zero-sum approaches. What is required is reflection and engaging in thoughtful and targeted diplomacy that addresses the sources of discontent in the developing world. These ideas are encapsulated in the *RACE* framework, which is elaborated next.

- A** REMEDY
- B** ACKNOWLEDGE
- C**OMPETE
- D**EMPOWER

A REMEDY

Deepening protectionism, populism, and polarisation not only corrode liberal democracies but also undermine the systemic appeal of democracies.

This is a structural domestic challenge for democratic societies, which adversely impacts the ability to shape international norms.

Remedying domestic challenges to liberal values and demonstrating the tangible achievements of democracies and democratic systems of governance in bettering people's lives are critical from a narrative contestation perspective.

B ACKNOWLEDGE

Reflexive reactions that are critical of countries' economic and developmental cooperation with China do more harm than good.

Beijing is correct in arguing that the world, particularly developing countries, suffer from a development deficit.

In this context, unthinking criticism of Chinese developmental diplomacy will only alienate potential partners.

It is far better to acknowledge the tangible benefits of China's developmental initiatives where they do not impinge on one's strategic interests.

COMPETE

It is imperative for liberal democracies and like-minded partners to compete with China when it comes to development diplomacy.

Doing so requires actively engaging with countries across the developing world in order to address their developmental challenges. This entails increased investment, industrial cooperation, technology transfers and maintaining open markets.

In addition, it is necessary to take tangible steps to address grievances and disaffection of developing countries with the functioning of existing multilateral institutions. Instead of walking away from multilateral institutions, developed countries need to actively work to make them more representative.

EMPOWER

In dealing with countries from the developing world, it is imperative for liberal democracies and like-minded partners to eschew drawing ideological lines and preaching from a moral pedestal.

Such an approach will only engender reflexive nationalistic responses, deepen alienation and likely bolster reactionary political actors.

Instead, it would be far more effective to deepen exchanges with and among lawmakers, media and civil society across countries while encouraging the institutionalisation of stakeholder participation, parliamentary oversight over investments and projects and transparency mechanisms in developing countries.

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