

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, author will provide the background information regarding the taken issue about China's giant economic growth and also its eventual impacts to the environment and further impact to the global emission. This chapter is also including the theoretical framework, research question, research argument, and also the writing structure of the thesis.

A. Background

China has been becoming one of the most leading country for its very remarkable period of rapid economic growth (World Bank, 2019). With its position as the world's second largest economy, China with a population of 1.4 billion has contributed approximately 30% of the global growth in the past eight years. As reported also by World Bank, the total growth of China's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has averaged closely 10% a year which comes to the fastest sustained expansion nominee of the history of major economy (World Bank, 2019). However, along with its great achievement of an average 10% GDP growth a year, it also has led China to become one of the world's largest source of carbon emissions and also bad air quality in many of its major cities that failed to reach the international health standards (Eleanor Albert, 2016).

Since the growing of China's economy through its rapid industrialization, environmental crisis has emerged as one of the most demanding challenges to the country (Eleanor Albert, 2016). The growing of Chinese consumers spending power is very much in line with the emerging of the environmental problems. As reported, China has the total of 16 cities that listed on the world's most polluted cities both for its air and its water (Gerth, 2017). Extreme water contamination and shortage have

compounded arrive weakening (Eleanor Albert, 2016). Generally speaking, environmental pollution is very much a global concern that rapid-growing economies accidentally have to face. Economic structure, technological level, political systems, governance capacity, institutional buildings, as well as public awareness and also social participation are some factors that are related to this environmental issue (Gang, 2019).

China's environmental problems have been becoming the emergency alert ever since the country reach the increasing economic growth time by time for the past two decades. This rapid economic growth of China is resulting to such growing impact not only in the economic and political realms, but also in the environment. As the world's largest population, its industrialization is associated with considerable energy consumption and severe pollution (Sun, 2016). The environmental crisis is covering both the indoor and outdoor pollution, water scarcity and pollution, desertification, and also soil pollution that lead to major health issues for the Chinese residents (Kan, 2009). This particular environmental issue can cause to severe disease including lung cancer, acute respiratory infection, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Zhang JJ, 2007). The total number of annual death reaches 420,000 premature deaths according to the WHO reports. Water pollution also becomes a serious health concern in China, particularly in rural areas (Kan, 2009). Climate change has also been another significant topic that is related to the health problems along with disposal and treatment of electronic waste and also heavy metal pollution in the soil. Reported that approximately 70% of the electronic waste generated worldwide is processed in China, posing substantial risk to human health and the environment (Ni HG, 2009). The Pollution coming from heavy metal such as lead, mercury, chromium, cadmium, and arsenic has also become progressively prominent (He K, 2009). In seeing this problems of China, the US always

comes up with the critics on how China is going to tackle its environmental crisis since China today emits more carbon dioxide than the U.S. (Gardner, 2019).

China has been beginning to focus on these issues and has boarded on strategic transformation from economic development as the single subject to environment and development in building an energy-saving and environment-friendly society by the year of 2020 (Kan, 2009). Under Xi Jinping administration, who started to be in charge since 2012, Xi's government began to decide changing the development path. In 2015, the 13th five-year plan set the target "to build a clean, low-carbon, safe and efficient energy system." There are several actions taken by the government as part of the implementation of this plan including lessening the favorable conditions for coal power plants for new plants, delaying or stopping the planning and approval of coal power projects, launching an effort to better integrate renewable energy, and also focusing on the development of electric cars as a long-term solution for the ever-increasing oil-dependency in the sector of transport (Sandholt, 2019).

The following year of 2017, at the 19th Communist Party Congress, President Xi Jinping delivered his report covering a wide range of national priorities including the whole chapter of environmental related visions, Xi also stated the commitment regarding the development of "ecological civilization" as the major priority for the country and also as a precondition for the continuation of Chinese economic development (Sandholt, 2019). Ensuring the harmony between humankind and nature is one of the principles of Xi's Thought. The "ecological civilization" itself is a vision that will require through the considerations of environmental integration into the economy, politics, culture and society as well (Boer, 2017). The country's vision of ecological civilization consists of three core dimensions of sustainable

development which are consist of the environment, the economic, and the social dimension (Kuhn, 2019). To this day, as the new strategy of President Xi Jinping in which a turn to renewable energy, China has become a dominant country for its major global solar-panel market. Moreover, now China is expanding its support for oil-saving technologies, also the source of funding for the development and production of very much everything from batteries to electric cars (Jaffe, 2018).

As reported on NYTimes.com, Chinese government concern about environment has been increasing significantly especially since President Xi started in charge. Another actions that Chinese government has done in the issue of environment is, started earlier on January 2018, China stopped buying most recycled wasted (Parker, 2018). China's economic initiative, One Belt One Road (OBOR) has also been helping to increase the power of China's renewables sectors by creating businesses opportunities through clean-energy technology export and take on large-scale electricity projects in emerging countries (Hanada, 2019). Considering to China's position in the world's renewable energy projects, China is reported to take a lead in renewable energy and is currently the world's largest producer, exporter and also installer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles today. China has also taken lead in terms of the underlying technology with over 150,000 renewable energy patents as of 2016 and over 29 percent of the global total (Dudley, 2019).

China's vision on promoting clean energy has been a major action as a giant industrial country could take, however, this vision on green energy seems to be contradictory with China's trend on its economic policy that lately aims to raise the level of the green economy by promoting about clean energy. As reported that China's total coal power capacity has indeed decline by 8.1 (GW)

between January 2018 and June 2019 yet at the same time China increased its coal-fired power plant fleet by 42.9 GW in which this is resulting in the global coal fleet growing by 34.9 gigawatts over the past year and a half. This clearly shows that China a country that is recently hailed as a clean energy leader, the momentum of coal power has yet to be halted (Paraskova, 2019). Furthermore, China, today is still the world's number one source of planet-warming carbon emissions (Smith M. K., 2018), with the total of 30 percent of the world pollutions (Sustainability, 2019).

B. Research Question

After several points explained on the background, the author drew a research question which is:

Why did China's government under President Xi Jinping embrace ecological civilization as the country's vision?

C. Theoretical Framework

Political Economy of Environment

Political economy is a field of study in social science that studies such production, trade, and their relationship with the law and the government. Political economy is considered as a complex field that covers a broad range of political interests (Corporate Finance Institute Editors, 2019). A brief definition of political economy is that this term is still widely used to describe any government policy that has an economic impact (Kenton, 2019). In political economy, political processes are influenced by the use of capital and labor, this also generate policy outcomes with the most benefit. This political behavior in an economy is shaped by interests, ideas and institutions (Corporate Finance Institute Editors, 2019).

a. Interests

Interests include the interest of individuals and also groups who has their own power to involve and influence the policy. Those individuals in government tend to promote their own both economic and political interests that will give them access to hold power.

b. Ideas

Ideas are considered as an important instrument that brings a significant influence on policy regarding both economic and political interests.

c. Institutions

Institutions are including those considered as political rules that define how leaders are chosen and also covering how a new policy can be implemented.

The term international political economy deals with the relationships that exist between countries in the fields of trade, money, capital and migration which also entails the relationship within a single country regarding its domestic and international interest (Daunton, 2018). In determining a country's national interest, this international political economy explains how politicians and their officials had their opposing views of what might constitute the national interest itself, this then later is shaped by their own ideologies and by the ideas of leading economists, this is also shaped by a sense of what might demand to the electorate or to powerful economic interests (Daunton, 2018).

Now come to the political economy of the environment, it basically explains how the term political economy itself typically refers to the study of the collective or political processes through which public economic decision are made (Wallace E. Oates, 2001). While the additional term of the environment refers to how lately several interest group have been involving and influencing the flow of several policy making processes in regards of their own purpose. For this view that environmental

measures are influenced by specific national interests that lead to where social benefits and costs play a role in determining the outcomes. Thus, this is clearly a way in which economic competition among governments can encourage good fiscal and also environmental decisions (Wallace E. Oates, 2001).

In outlining this demand of certain interest groups, the government then use environmental measure to achieve economic outcomes in considering the policy. This then considered to benefit everyone in which the government can use these instrument of environment both to control emissions and also to redistribute income (Wallace E. Oates, 2001). What then the government would do in this very point is, fulfilling the demand of interest groups regarding the environmental measure on the policy-making, the government would also provide basic support for research and the distribution of information on environmental problems, since these are considered as the activities that benefits everyone (Wallace E. Oates, 2001). In addition, the government would also more likely to invest in several environmental related projects.

In this sub field of study, several scientist also explained how interest groups also see the action taken by the government in regards with this environmental measure. Some environmental groups argued that the policy that the government is made is quite like a 'commercialisation' of the environment in achieving still the political and economic interest of the elites (GEBHARD KIRCHGÄSSNER, 2002). According to David Wheeler, there is so called as the willingness of the government to "play the environment card" to promote growth. This phenomena of economic growth soon will provide the means for a more acceptable environmental response including improved regulations and even also a rise in investment in cleaner production processes (Jennifer Clapp, 2005).

D. Research Argument

This research argues that China's campaign on ecological civilization has been influenced by its interest in expanding their economic benefits internationally, especially to those countries involved in China's Belt Road Initiative.

E. Research Methodology

1. Type of Research

In this research, the author used explanatory research method to prove the defined concept that is used to explain and prove the case that is particularly discussed on the research paper. In this research paper, author used the concept of national interest that later shaped the formulation of national interest.

2. Level of Analysis

In this research study, the unit of analysis was the international system, in which the research was about how China's economic initiative led to another focus on environmental issue which is about renewable energy, while its unit of explanation is state, in this research is China is focusing on the environmental aspects more than ever under Xi Jinping administrations. Therefore the level of analysis is reduction.

3. Data Collection Technique

In doing this research, the author used the secondary method which is by looking at the previous sources of study and research that are related with the similar topics regarding the issue of China's renewable energy as the response to what is happening in China regarding the water and air pollution that has been going worse time by time, also to analyze how this action taken by China is also

related to its giant economic strategy under One Belt One Road initiative.

4. Data Analysis Technique

In analyzing this research, author used Deduction type of analysis in which the data is driven from a specific concept that later will be proven through facts and also additional research that are retrieved from the data for this research where the author is looking for the data from reading sources both printed and non-printed files.

F. Structure of Writing

In this research, there are four chapters provided by the author. The first chapter explained about the background of the study, research question, theoretical framework, research argument, research methodology and also the structure of writing.

The second chapter explains about how China has become one of the world's giant economic country since quite a very long time, in this chapter there will also be a short escalation on how this economic welfare of China can lead to several environmental and also public issues.

Third chapter explains about how Chinese government promote ecological campaign through what they call as 'green economy' in which showed China's economic intention behind their actions in addressing ecological campaign.

Fourth chapter, which is the last chapter concludes all of the research materials from the very beginning of the chapter until the end of the explanation of the research materials. In this chapter, the author also gave some sort of suggestion or recommendation for further study related to the same case study taken.