

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Regarded as one of the largest economic powerhouses today, China is often presumed to be projecting the power it has to be translated into political power to further fulfill its national interests by utilizing the economic power it possesses through infrastructure, trade, investments, and economic development to almost all regions in the world, mostly under its Belt and Road Initiative. An additional component added to the BRI framework recently is the Polar Silk Road which rather came as a surprise to the world when the country officially announced its ambitions for the region in 2018 that was previously deemed simply as a cold and inaccessible region full of ice especially due to the zero territorial sovereignty the country possesses. This then raises the question of **“what are the factors that influenced China in initiating the Polar Silk Road in 2018?”** which was subsequently elaborated using theories on the making of a foreign policy on both the domestic and international scope, geoeconomics, and national interest.

It is believed that China’s foreign policy and international political strategy throughout the years has its fair share in contributing to the establishment of a certain economic strategy in the country. Each administration shows a distinct feature towards China’s actions and foreign policy, indicating that China’s position towards domestic and external conditions is highly reliant on its leaders. Xi’s strategy is believed to have set the stage for China’s subsequent strategies, including the BRI and the Polar Silk Road. It also becomes clear that China is

optimistic about developing the Arctic and seeking a presence in the region, which raises the question of why and what the region has to offer for China. The current condition of a more accessible Arctic has allowed states to take part and seek presence within the region – revealing that the region bears a significant amount of economic potential, especially for natural resources and maritime trade routes. Using a geopolitical approach, it is highly likely that China established the PSR especially due to the geostrategic importance of the Arctic region, as indicated by its activities in the past with strategic locations throughout the world, including the South China Sea and its strive for resources in regions such as Africa.

However, the attractiveness of the Arctic region is believed to simply be the “tip of the iceberg” to why China established the Polar Silk Road. The writer believes that domestic sources of foreign policy significantly contribute towards said decision. First, it is believed that the PSR is a manifestation of the “Chinese Dream” and the illustration of the Fen Fa You Wei foreign policy under Xi Jinping, indicating that the regime factor and political elites are influential especially due to the country’s communist and centralized economic system. In this sense, the plans to establish the PSR can be seen as a historical step taken by the Asian country - further fulfilling Xi’s vision of “striving for achievement”. Second, being an “old player” in the geoeconomic arena, it is possible for China to conduct numerous projects and investments in various regions due to the surplus of economic capabilities it possesses, which is one of the main tools in conducting geoeconomics – and is believed to be the case for PSR as well. This has also been indicated numerous times through past projects, in which Chinese investments and aid at

times translates to international support in issues concerning China - making it beneficial for China also in sectors other than the economy. Third, the PSR is also believed to serve as a tool for China's economic and regional development. In this case, though it may seem that China is "throwing off" tons of money offshore and questions may arise regarding what it is doing it for, it is an understatement to say that the BRI projects are highly beneficial for China's economic development and position in the global economy. Through the PSR initiative, it is believed that several regions would benefit from the project compared to several previous projects which contribute to the significant disparity between provinces. Furthermore, this would be highly beneficial not just for the development of regions, but also for overall national economic development.

That said, it can be concluded that the factors influencing China established the PSR in 2018 is multifaceted and can be segmented into two: (1) external factors and (2) internal factors – both contributing to fulfilling the country's national interests, be it for survival or maximizing one's power. In this sense, though numerous scholars have addressed the hidden yet obvious geostrategic importance of the Arctic region, which includes its immense natural resources reserve and a potentially commercial maritime trade route which can be identified as the main external factor, the writer believes that this is not all. In this case, other factors also include internal and the country's domestic environment, which includes the fulfillment and manifestation of a Chinese Dream and an illustration of China's "striving for achievement" foreign policy under Xi, a search for a new geoeconomic

zone to contribute to its national interest, power, and position in the international arena, as well as a tool for China's economic and regional development.

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