

Regional Divisions in the U.S. and the U.S.-China Trade War (Summary)

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This paper analyzes the causes and background of the U.S.-China trade war from the perspective of regional divisions in the United States.

When President Trump was elected in 2016, he called for “America First,” sparking a trade war with China. The roots and backdrop of the U.S.-China trade conflict have been examined in published reviews mainly from the stance of international relations and international politics. Common dialogue is that China now poses a threat to the U.S. and challenges the U.S.-led world order, with the trade war a defence mechanism to suppress China. That thread may be relevant in terms of international relations, but by shifting our perspective domestically, the Trump administration’s triggering of the U.S.-China trade war and the distinct regional divisions in the United States which gave rise to that presidency become visible. Specifically, there is a clear divide in the voting results of the presidential election between the east and west coast regions, where many international metropolis are located, and the central and southern regions, which are relatively sluggish in terms of economy. These regional divisions, which led to the election of the Trump administration, remain a key factor in the U.S. political system. Hence, in order to effectively analyze the reasons behind the U.S.-China trade war, it is first essential to consider the U.S. domestic environment which gave rise to the Trump government who initiated the conflict. In Japan, as analysis on the causes and background of the U.S.-China trade dispute from the aspect of regional divisions in the United States is infrequent, this research would like to focus on this point.

The composition of this text is as follows. Section 2 organizes the previous research and elucidates the position of this paper. Section 3 arranges the Trump administration’s policy developments and clarifies that the U.S.-China trade war is not a single undertaking, but rather one part of a framework on anti-globalization and anti-international cooperation across the country. Section 4 shows the results of each state's vote in the 2016 presidential election, shedding light on the differences between Democratic and Republican support and the presence of political divisions between the East and West coasts, home to cosmopolitan metropolis, and the economically dawdling central and southern regions. In addition, these regional divisions are examined geographically at the county level, and historically dating back to the first presidential election in 1789. Considering the impact of regional divisions on U.S. politics, we point out the domestic factors at play in the U.S.-China trade war. The article is summarized and potential themes for future studies are specified in Section 5.

Keywords: China-United States trade war; United States presidential election; regional fragmentation; globalization

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