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Trump’s Trade War

Trump’s Trade War illustrates a strained relationship between the world’s foremost hegemony, the United States of America and The People’s Republic of China. The documentary follows interviews of Chinese businessmen, Chinese government representatives, and US officials as the recent developments in US-China relations, specifically concerning the controversial Trump presidency. President Trump early on in his presidency was being influenced by two groups of advisors. The globalists who tried to convince the president of the importance of maintaining trade relations with China for the benefit of the entire world, including American citizens. The nationalists, who essentially won out over the globalist influence, wanted to take an aggressive trade policy towards the Chinese. Nationalists wanted to emphasize the importance of American production and nationalist economic ideas such as tariffs. Tariffs, having been historical known to be harmful overall to a nations economy due to retaliatory tariffs best exemplified by the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, seemed to come out of nowhere as Trumps initial relationship with the Chinese ruler was largely positive. I remember after Trump was elected and I was actually hopeful for his presidency as he seemed to be building a stronger economic relationship with China. I felt as though I had whiplash when Trump announced to trade war.

Relating this documentary to chapter 8, it seems that China strictly follows the idea of autarky. It takes a passive aggressive stance towards foreign businesses, in that it condones unfair business practices involved in extracting technologies from competing companies. It is heavily protectionist towards domestic companies. Moving closer to home the United States should shun nationalist ideologies as they would surely lead to the loss of US hegemony. One of the primary metrics nationalists seem to point to is the trade deficit we have with China. This however doesn’t tell the full story since many American companies, which are among the most successful in the world, have long since gone international. So trade deficits would be difficult to measure for these massive corporations.

Finally, I feel like if Trump hadn’t surrounded himself with nationalists for advice we would likely have a much more positive relationship with China. Trade wars in the modern economy are almost certainly a net negative for the majority of participants. However, we shouldn’t discount the intense effects that some small parts of the economy will feel as globalization continues. For example, the car manufacturing city of Detroit has been completely obliterated by globalization and the loss of American manufacturing jobs, while the rest of the country and the world for that matter have benefited heavily from the continued affordability of motor vehicles. Populations will have to adjust to economic demands as time goes on and this is a price we have to accept. While I don’t think truckers shouldn’t be expected to “learn to code”, their children their children really should work towards taking on more advanced jobs. Education in the 1st world will continue to be one of the most important resources citizens have for enhancing their economic standing and strengthening a weakening middle class. We should probably legislate some sort of aid for negatively affected groups of people, since our consumer lifestyles have largely been maintained in parallel with the growth of their poverty.