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CLASSIFICATION, CHARACTERISTICS AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE BARRIERS

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Today, economic globalization has become an irreversible trend in world economic development. Economic globalization requires production internationalization, trade liberalization and financial globalization. However, the advancement of economic globalization is carried out under a sound market economy mechanism, and its development is also a gradual process. The emergence and strengthening of trade barriers in this process is not accidental. It is the product of the continuous development of international economy, society, and technology. This article will take China as an example to introduce the impact of international trade on a country and put forward suggestions for China to improve the efficiency of foreign trade under the influence of international trade barriers.

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Tariff barriers

1. The development of tariff barriers

As early as the Yuan Dynasty, China formed a tariff system with protective tariffs on foreign goods and native goods. For example, the Shanghai Bureau of Ships said that Wang Nan was suspicious, so he decided on a double-drawing and a single-drawing system. The double-drawing is also for the local goods, and the single-drawing is also for the local goods." This method of single-dumping of local goods and double- dumping of foreign goods can be said to be the origin of China's protective tariff system. As we all know, the protection of trade policies in the West began in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during the Mercantilism period, specifically when the capitalist mode of production began to take shape in Britain, France and other countries. From the perspective of the implementation of the protective tariff policy alone, China is also more than 150 years earlier than the Western world.

In the 19th century, with the expansion of developed capitalist countries on a global scale, the trade relations between different countries developed to an unprecedented degree of closeness. In this context, what kind of tariff policy a country should adopt has attracted more and more attention.

In the first half of the 19th century, the United States and Europe, which represented the world's major trading entities, had diametrically opposed tariff policies. The U.S. government inherited the thought of controlling trade during the mercantilism period, and implemented a high-tariff policy despite the opposition of southern farmers. However, Europe is moving faster and faster in the direction of free trade, gaining unprecedented freedom since the Roman era. For example, in 1860, Britain and France agreed to a reciprocal tariff reduction, and France established customs unions with other European countries in turn. But this liberal policy in Europe soon suffered a severe blow. The resurgence of the old state of nationalism triggered a tariff war. First is Germany, and second is France. The outbreak of the war in 1914, and the vigorous rise of nationalist sentiments that followed, intensified the tendency of trade protection. Coupled with the impact of the economic depression in the world, in the end, the nationalist policy finally regained its dominant position. One government after another set up new trade barriers, and even Britain gave up free trade in 1919 and completely succumbed to protectionism in the world economic crisis of 1931. At this time, the United States suddenly began to reduce tariffs. In order to expand exports, the Roosevelt administration initiated a campaign to reduce tariff barriers. Congress passed the "Reciprocal Trade Agreement Act" in 1934, reducing tariffs by 50% in order to obtain reciprocal reductions from other countries. The reason why the United States will turn to "trade liberalization" is based on its rapid economic development. At this time, the United States increased its production capacity at a development speed faster than that of other major industrial countries. Its products were highly competitive in the international market, so it could benefit from free trade. This state of affairs continued until after World War II.

Looking back on this period of history, we can find that at this time, various countries have not fully realized the importance of "liberalization of international trade." Their foreign trade policies pay too much attention to encouraging exports, and are often affected by the domestic situation, returning to "protectionism" repeatedly. However, the difficulties of the world economy in the 1930s have made people increasingly realize that to fully share the benefits of production and development brought about by the specialization of labor, a broad trade network must be established. This led to the 1947 tariffs and With the birth of the General Agreement on Trade, its main task is to promote

the negotiation of tariff reduction among various countries. In order to reduce the tariff rate from 40% to 4%, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade hosted eight rounds of trade negotiations. There is no doubt that the work done by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in promoting international trade is fruitful. Since 1945, the volume of international trade has increased by 16 times, while the total value of world output in the same period has only increased by 3 times.

Looking back on the development of international trade, we can draw a clear clue: from mercantilist controlled trade to free trade in new economics, to protectionist high- tariff policies, to low-tariff agreements in customs unions, and then informally. The emergence of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and finally the establishment of the official World Trade Organization. Although the process of international economic exchanges shows a general trend from non-cooperative game to cooperative game, from "protectionism" to "liberalism", there are also repeated repetitions of the two. However, since the establishment of the WTO, the trend of international trade liberalization has become increasingly obvious, and it has finally become an irreversible historical trend.

2. The role of tariff barriers

From the current point of view, tariffs are still an important barrier in international trade:

First, the lower average level of tariffs masks the high tariffs on certain commodities. For example, in the United States, although the average tariff on industrial products is only 3%, the tariff on some industrial products is as high as 30%—40%.

Second, the lower rate of nominal tariffs masks the effective protection rate of tariffs. In the reality that tariffs are imposed on both final products and intermediate products, the effective protection rate of tariffs and the nominal protection rate of final products are different. The effective tax rate of Japanese tariffs is about 2 to 2.5 times the nominal tariff rate. In the early 1960s, the nominal tax rate of imported pig iron in the United States was 2%, but the effective protection rate of tariffs was 9%; the nominal tax rate of clothing was 25%, but the effective protection rate was 36%.

Third, the lower normal import tax rate masks the higher import surcharge. When a country imports goods, in addition to levying import taxes at the normally announced tax rate, when necessary, it also levies a part of the import tax at the temporarily announced tax rate. The purpose is either to cope with the balance of payments crisis, or to prevent foreign goods from being dumped, or to implement a discriminatory policy against a certain country. For example, on August 15, 1971, in order to reduce imports and solve its balance of payments crisis, the United States implemented a "new economic policy" and announced a 10% import surcharge, which greatly affected the exports of many countries. Later, the U.S. government had to abolish this tax rate due to strong opposition from other countries.

Fourth, the implementation of anti-dumping duties is currently a means of restricting imports commonly used internationally, especially in developed countries. Anti-dumping is a means of protecting domestic products and markets that WTO allows member states to adopt, but it is being abused by developed countries. Since the 1990s, China has become the biggest victim of international anti-dumping, involving tens of billions of dollars. Some anti-dumping duties imposed on China exceeded 100%. From 1993 to 1994, Mexico levied so-called anti-dumping duties on more than 4,000 commodities in ten categories of China.

Fifth, with the development of regional grouping trends, tariffs have become a means for countries participating in the Customs Union to impose import restrictions on goods from non-member countries. Countries that participate in the customs union, such as the member states of the European Economic and Monetary Union, implement free trade internally, and apply a uniform tax rate when imposing tariffs on foreign countries.

3. Forms of tariff barriers

But neither developed nor developing countries can equate "tariffs" with "tariff barriers." The tariff barriers we usually talk about refer to high import taxes and practices that hinder imports in

terms of tariff setting, tax calculation methods, and tariff management. According to the "Guide to Investment and Trade Barriers" of the Ministry of Commerce, common tariff barriers have the following forms: tariff peaks, tariff escalations, tariff quotas, specific tariffs, and ad valorem tariffs.

A. Tariff peak

Tariff peaks refer to the high tariffs maintained by a small number of products when the overall tariff level is low. After eight rounds of GATT negotiations, the average tariff level of WTO members has dropped significantly, but some members still maintain tariff peaks in many areas. For example, in the Uruguay Round of negotiations, a country agreed to substantially reduce tariffs, while at the same time in several industrial sectors, including food, textiles, footwear, leather products, jewelry, artificial jewelry, ceramics, glass, trucks, railway vehicles, etc. The tariff peaks are retained. The tariffs for ceramics are 30%, the tariffs for glasses and other glassware are 33.2% to 38%, and the tariffs for trucks with a payload of 5-20 tons are 20%. Another example is that some products in Japan still maintain high tariff levels. These products include agricultural products, sugar, chocolate desserts (10%), cheese and milk products (22.4-40%), sweet biscuits (18-20.4%) jam (12-34%), smoked salmon (15%), raw materials (lead oxide, molten alumina, nickel). In the case of a low overall tariff level, the high tariffs of the above-mentioned specific products unreasonably hinder the normal export of related products from other countries and constitute trade barriers.

B. Tariff escalation

Tariff escalation is a way to set tariffs, that is, a lower tariff or even a zero rate is usually set on the imported raw materials of a specific industry. As the processing depth increases, the tariffs on semi-finished products and finished products are correspondingly increased. tax rate. Tariff escalation can effectively achieve the effect of restricting the import of semi-finished and finished products with high added value, and is a relatively common trade barrier. Tariff escalation exists in both developed and developing countries. For example, in order to protect the domestic processing industry or manufacturing industry, a country applies a 5% tariff rate to steel suitable for automobiles, while the tax rate for body parts made of the same type of steel is 15%, and the tax rate for finished automobiles reaches 30%. This tariff escalation limits the export of support products. Another example is the high tariffs imposed by the United States on imported medium and low-grade ceramic products, and the low tariffs imposed on high-end ceramic products have created obstacles to the export of Chinese ceramic products to the United States. In addition, in the United States, the tariff for sports shoes with an area of upper leather that exceeds 51% of the total area of the upper is 8%, and 33% for the area of upper leather that is less than 51% of the total area of the upper. This unreasonable tariff structure puts related Chinese products in a very unfavorable competitive position in the US market.

C. Tariff quota

Tariff quota means that a lower tax rate is applied to imported products within a certain amount (quota amount), and a higher tax rate is applied to imported products that exceed the quota amount. In practice, there are many ways to manage and issue tariff quotas, such as first collection, bidding, auction, and administrative distribution. Certain improper practices in the process of quota determination, issuance and management may hinder trade. In the case of administrative distribution, barrier measures may appear in the following links:

A) Determination of quota amount. For example, the quota determined by a WTO member is lower than its average export volume in the last three representative years, so the quota constitutes a trade barrier.

B) Quota issuance and management. The lack of transparency or notarization in the issuance and management of quotas will also create trade barriers. For example, there is a lack of transparency in the management of tariffs on dairy products in a certain country, and sometimes quotas are even issued to enterprises that no longer engage in the dairy product business, causing quotas to be emptied.

In addition, in the process of issuing tariff quotas through auctions, bidding, etc., human manipulation or other reasons may also cause barriers to imported products.

C) Specific tax

Specific tax is a tariff levied on the basis of the unit of measurement such as the weight, quantity, capacity, length and area of the commodity. Among them, weight is the more commonly used measurement unit. Some countries use gross weight measurement methods, and some countries use net weight measurement methods, or use "gross as net" and other measurement methods.

The formula for calculating the specific tax amount is: tax amount = quantity of goods × specific tax per unit

For example, the European Union's 1992 tax regulations stipulate that a tariff of 40 Euro currency units is levied per hectoliter of champagne. China also adopts specific taxation standards for imported goods such as beer, crude oil, and photographic film.

The characteristic of levying specific tariffs is that the procedures are simple, and the specifications, quality, and prices of the goods are not required to be reviewed, and they are easy to calculate. Due to the fixed unit tax, the same tariff is imposed on the import of low-grade and high-end products of inferior quality and low price, which makes the import of low-grade products unfavorable and has a greater protective effect on them. When the domestic price is lowered, due to the fixed tax amount, the tax burden is relatively increased, which is not conducive to imports, and the protective effect is strengthened. For this reason, some countries use specific tariffs extensively, and they are especially widely applied to the import of food, beverages, and animal and vegetable oils. About 33% of the U.S. tariff lines are subject to specific tariffs; Norwegian specific tariffs also account for 28%. Since most of the exports of developing countries are of a higher grade, they have to bear much higher specific tariff burdens than developing countries.

D) Ad valorem tax

Ad valorem tax is a tariff levied based on the price of imported goods. The tax rate is expressed as a percentage of the price of the goods.

The calculation formula of ad valorem tax is: tax amount = total value of goods × ad valorem tax rate

For example, according to China's 1997 tariff regulations, the tax levied on sunglasses under tariff code 9004.1000 is 20% of the imported duty-paid value. Ad valorem tax is the main taxation method adopted by various countries. Because: First, since the ad valorem tax is calculated according to the value of the goods, it is easier to estimate how much fiscal revenue should be received. Second, the amount of ad valorem tax changes with changes in commodity prices, and ad valorem tariffs constitute an obstacle to the import of highly processed products or luxury goods. For example, if the specific tax is 1 liter/2 US dollars, the tax rate is 100% for a bottle of cheap wine worth 2 US dollars; while for a bottle of high-priced wine worth 20 US dollars, it is only equivalent to a tax rate of 10%. The 10% ad valorem tax is $0.2 for cheaper wine and $2 for more expensive wine. Third, in international tariff reduction negotiations, it is easy to compare the tariff levels of various countries and negotiate tariff reductions on the basis of ad valorem taxes. However, the tariffs levied on ad valorem taxes largely depend on the method used to determine the taxable value. Therefore, if the customs determines that the value of the dutiable goods is US$1,000, then a tariff of US$100 will be levied at a 10% ad valorem tax. If the customs determines that the duty-paid value is US$1200, the importer will have to pay US$120 import duties for the same commodity. If the customs does not use the price listed on the invoice as the basis for determining the value, but adopts other methods, then the benefits of tariff concessions to trade will be greatly reduced. Therefore, in order to ensure that the importer’s duty is not higher than the normal tariff level determined in the importer’s tariff reduction schedule, it is therefore very important to establish rules for the valuation of goods.

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