

報告タイトル

Leadership Without Capability?
Japan and the International Digital Trade Rule-making
under the Perspective of Structural Power

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International Digital trade is developing rapidly while commonly-accepted regulation rules have not yet formed internationally, and gaps exist among countries on key principles. Japan is taking an active leading role in codifying and disseminating international digital trade rules, which, however, is not consistent with its limited strength in the development of digital economy. Thus, while assessing the role of Japan in international digital trade rule-making, a gap can be identified between its strength of digital economic development and the “power” of participation in the formulation of rules while assessing the role of Japan in international digital trade rule-making. Without high-tech giant and technological competitiveness of its own country, what is the driving power and endorsement behind Japan’s eye-catching performance in the realm of international digital trade regulation? How can the mismatch between a country’s leadership in the international digital trade governance and its capability on digital economy development be explained?

With the structural power theory, this article extracts influencing factors in the digital trade rule-making into three variables: “leadership”, “capability” and “structure”, constructing an interaction model to explain the formation of Japan’s leadership. In digital trade rule-making, the material structure is composed of the security, production, and financial structure provided by the geopolitical pattern and Japan's endowments. The interpretation on knowledge structure in digital arena is an innovative highlight in this article. It consists of technological supports and principles on data governance. The interaction between the material structure and the knowledge structure forms the structural foundation for Japan’s status in this process. The structural factors are also constantly confirmed and reinforced in the exercise of the power.

The research extends the understanding of the source and composition of the power in international political economy and help explain, even predict the rule-making process of international digital trade. By combining the global governmental issues with the power politics in international relations, this paper explores the application of classical IR theory in the emerging cutting-edge field, trying to present an intriguing perspective on the questions of “who governs?” and “How it governs?” in the global arena.

