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Trump Right On China The First Time

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By Robert Weiner and Ben Lasky

National Report from Washington – first in a monthly series by Robert Weiner and Ben Lasky

After deferring to China for Korea and seeing no results, President Trump’s return to disciplining China over trade crimes is the right position. On Aug. 14, President Trump authorized a probe on China’s trade practices, with a focus on intellectual property theft as well as theft of American technologies. Add to the mix: devalued currency, refusal to sell fair quantities of American-made products, unbelievably low worker wages, lead and other poisons in dog food and baby food, plagiarized health and cancer research, deficient tires. Trump has now come back around to the correct view.



The President slipped off the wagon for a while. He pressed on the point that the U.S. needed China to help deter a nuclear North Korea. However, dozens of missile tests later, with Kim Jong Un even closer to a long-range nuclear weapon, Trump now realizes that China only used the North Korea bait to give themselves more trade freedom against us. It is time to call the Chinese government out.



The U.S. economy is weakened by Chinese intellectual property theft, counterfeit goods, and deficient products competing with American brands. China was unwilling to help make North Korea release Otto Warmbier early enough to get him medical help. In an interview on CNN Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) the Senate Democratic Leader, told Trump how to handle China: “You say, ‘you can’t push America around anymore,’ which they’ve been able to do for administration after administration. Stop doing that. The President should say, ‘You’re not dealing with North Korea the way you should be.’”

On June 20, Trump tweeted about Warmbier, “While I greatly appreciate the efforts of President Xi & China to help with North Korea, it has not worked out. At least I know China tried!”

Instead, China is giving us a victory here and there— they will now import beef from us. That’s nice of them. Apparently we can sell cows to China, but not cars.

Schumer criticized Trump for at first reversing course. In an April 12 press conference right after his meetings with China’s leader, Trump said, “They’re not currency manipulators,” which he had called them at least fifteen times on the campaign trail. Schumer said of Trump and his team, “Now they’re saying they (China) aren’t manipulating their currency. They are. I think China just does what it wants...They gain trillions of dollars by stealing intellectual property, by dumping excess steel and aluminum. The way to get China to help with North Korea is be tougher with them on trade.”

President Trump said that when he met with President Xi at the White House, “After listening for 10 minutes, I realized it’s not so easy. I felt pretty strongly that they had a tremendous power [over] North Korea.” Of course China has leverage over North Korea. North Korea depends on China as a trading partner. In 10 minutes, Trump’s view on China for thirty years apparently changed with a persuasive short argument from the president of a country that continually walks all over the U.S. This was Trump listening to the “last man in the room” at its worst.

Trump said he told President Xi, “The way you’re going to make a good trade deal is to help us with North Korea; otherwise we’re just going to go it alone.” The last part of that sentence is what the U.S., along with its allies, should do. China will help regardless because it’s in China’s own interest to do so.

Not allowing China to take advantage of the U.S. has been a Democratic issue for over forty years, from Dick Gephardt to Bernie Sanders, and it became a key one for Trump too— a rare area of campaign agreement. The president’s promise to stand up to China was one of the major reasons he won the election.

China should not get a free ride because we want their help with North Korea. In 2015, the FBI released a survey of 165 anonymous companies, half of which reported they had been victims of economic espionage. Of that half, 95 percent blame China.

The counterfeit goods market in China costs companies \$20 billion a year. Are they buying us by Americans enjoying a \$30 “Rolex” from a Times Square vendor? Simply put, China’s illegal actions are costing American jobs.

To prevent a nuclear North Korea, the recent U.S. deployment of the “mother of all bombs” was as much a warning to other countries, including North Korea, as it was about destroying ISIS tunnels in Afghanistan. The U.S. has military might and is willing to use it. North Korea knows that. It is not worth caving to China, who costs the U.S. billions of dollars a year, and allowing them to keep manipulating currency and committing economic espionage.

Otto Warmbier’s coma and death, and Korea’s missile tests and H-bomb, are just more proof Schumer is right—Instead of making nice with China, President Trump must hold them accountable, as he promised.

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