

# Van Mobley: Trump correct with tariffs on China

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Thirty years ago the Chinese Communists rolled the tanks on pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square and demonstrated their resolve to maintain their authoritarian/totalitarian regime by force. Shortly thereafter the Democrat Bill Clinton won the Presidency, in part, by savaging the incumbent Republican George H.W. Bush (who failed to sanction Beijing for Tiananmen Square) for coddling the “Butchers in Beijing.”

After he became president something transformed Bill Clinton and instead of advancing American interests in relation to the Chinese government he coddled the Chinese Communist Party by giving it expanded access to American economic markets. Perhaps he was motivated by the idea that by trading with China we could transform the Chinese Communists into nice people who didn’t roll tanks to crush protestors, allowed for democratic processes, and contributed to goodness and light all around the world as honest participants in a borderless free trade utopia.

This curious idea concerning trade’s therapeutic effects on its participants helped frame America’s relationship with the Chinese government during the Presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama as well. But as time passed it increasingly became apparent that trading with the Chinese was not changing the Chinese Communists and was instead having unforeseen and pernicious consequences. The Chinese Communists remained authoritarian/totalitarians, remained bent upon dominating the globe (something they saw as their birthright), continued to conceptualize trade as a type of warfare which justified their predatory trade practices and habit of stealing intellectual trade property and secrets, and were very successful at growing the Chinese economy. On the other hand the American economy declined as our GDP stagnated, much of our manufacturing sector went to China, and large swathes of our population suffered from chronic underemployment and a declining standard of living. Americans began to recognize that if we didn’t get off the trajectory Bill Clinton had placed us on the US economy would soon be

annihilated and instead of the Chinese Communists becoming more and more like us, we would become more and more like them – or maybe just become a sad little subordinate part of their expanding authoritarian/totalitarian system.

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Fortunately the American people are smart and can see past the end of their nose (unlike Tony Evers and the Democrats). So they decided to elect Donald Trump to avoid such a sorry and humiliating destiny. Together we are changing our and the world's trajectory. The Chinese Communists are either going to straighten up or we are going to disentangle our economies. Trump is using tariffs as a stick to help the Chinese government choose correctly but ultimately there are over a billion Chinese and it is really hard, and maybe impossible, for us to make them do something (with either carrots or sticks) that they have determined not to do.

President Trump realizes that the necessary steps he is taking to put the American economy back on the growth path are having some deleterious short term impacts upon American farmers (although there are multiple causes for decreasing farm commodity prices over the last few years and not all are related to Trump's trade actions). So Trump is taking care of farmers. Furthermore he has/is negotiating improved trade deals with our allies – like the USMCA – which will help Wisconsin farmers in the short and long run. Trump's policies are exactly what the doctor ordered. They are working now and will work in the long term.

Governor Evers should know all this and for that reason his decision this week to call upon Trump to remove the tariffs on China at precisely the moment when the Chinese Communists are massing tanks on the borders of Hong Kong (to snuff out the little bastion of freedom there and thereby expand the burgeoning Chinese Communist system) appears mysterious. Is Governor Evers dull-witted? Is he uninformed? Is he just an irresponsible Democratic hack stirring up trouble? Is he something worse than a dull-witted, uninformed, craven political hack? Instead of advancing the disproven notion that the Chinese Communists will change if we are nice to them and allow them to keep on plundering our economy why doesn't Governor Evers send a letter to Nancy Pelosi and her merry band of obstructionist House Democrats demanding they ratify the USMCA which Trump negotiated –

which we know will help Wisconsin's farmers?

I know Tony and have my eye on him. He needs to do better.

— *Mobley is a professor of history and economics at Concordia University Wisconsin and the president of Thiensville. The perspective advanced in this article is his own.*