

Trump Is a Chinese Agent



[Thomas L. Friedman](#) MARCH 29, 2017

The big story everyone is chasing is whether President Trump is a Russian stooge. Wrong. That's all a smoke screen. Trump is actually a Chinese agent. He is clearly out to make [China](#) great again. Just look at the facts.

Trump took office promising to fix our trade imbalance with China, and what's the first thing he did? He threw away a U.S.-designed free-trade deal with 11 other Pacific nations — a pact whose members make up [40 percent](#) of global [G.D.P.](#)

The Trans-Pacific Partnership was based largely on U.S. economic interests, benefiting our fastest-growing technologies and agribusinesses, and had more labor, environmental and human rights standards than any trade agreement ever. *And it excluded China. It was our baby, shaping the future of trade in Asia.*

Imagine if Trump were negotiating with China now as not only the U.S. president but also as head of a 12-nation trading bloc based on our values and interests. That's called l-e-v-e-r-a-g-e, and Trump just threw it away ... because he promised to in the campaign — without, I'd bet, ever reading TPP. What a chump! I can still hear the clinking of champagne glasses in Beijing.

Now more Asian nations are falling in line with China's regional trading association — the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — which has no serious environmental, intellectual property, human trafficking or labor standards like TPP. A Peterson Institute [study said](#) TPP would “increase annual real incomes in the United States by \$131 billion” by 2030, without changing total U.S. employment levels. Goodbye to that.

But Trump took his Make China Great campaign to a new level on Tuesday by rejecting the science on [climate change](#) and tossing out all Obama-era plans to shrink our dependence on coal-fired power. Trump also wants to weaken existing mileage requirements for U.S.-made vehicles. Stupid.

O.K., Mr. President, let's assume for a second that climate change is a hoax. Do you believe in math? There are now 7.5 billion people on the planet, and there will be 8.5 billion by 2030, according to the United Nations population bureau — and most will want to drive like us, eat protein like us and live in houses like us. And if they do, we'll eat up, burn up, smoke up and choke up the planet — and devour our fisheries, coral reefs, rivers and forests — at a pace we've never seen before. Major cities in India and China already can't breathe; wait for when there are another billion people.

That means that clean power, clean water, clean air, clean transportation and energy-efficient buildings will have to be the next great global industry, whether or not there is climate change. The demand will be huge.

So what is China doing? Its new five-year plan is a rush to [electric cars](#), batteries, nuclear, wind, solar and energy efficiency — and a [cap-and-trade](#) system for carbon. Trump's plan? More coal and oil. Hello? How can America be great if we don't dominate the next great global industry — clean power?

The U.S. state leading in clean energy innovations is California, which also has the highest vehicle emissions standards and the strictest building efficiency codes. Result: California alone has far more advanced energy jobs than there are coal miners in America, and the pay is better and the work is healthier. In January 2016, [CNNMoney reported](#) that nationally the U.S. “solar industry work force is bigger than that of oil and gas construction, and nearly three times the size of the entire coal mining work force.”

“More than half the electric vehicles sold in the U.S. are sold in California,” said Hal Harvey, C.E.O. of Energy Innovation. “If there are two jurisdictions hell-bent on transformation, it is China and California. There have been 200 million E.V.s sold in China already. They're called electric bicycles, which cost about \$400 — quiet, not contributing to congestion or pollution, and affordable.”

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China is loving this: It's doubling down on clean energy — because it has to and it wants to leapfrog us on technology — and we're doubling down on coal, squandering our lead in technology.

It was bitterly ironic that on the same day that President Trump took America on a great leap backward to coal, The Wall Street Journal reported that “Tencent Holdings Ltd. bought a 5% stake in [Tesla](#) Inc., giving the backing of China's most valuable company to the Silicon Valley electric-vehicle maker as it prepares to launch its first car aimed at the mass market. ... Having a powerful friend in China could help Tesla as it eyes further global expansion. Big Chinese tech companies have backed a wave of green-car start-ups in the country recently.”

If you liked buying your oil from Saudi Arabia, you'll love buying your electric cars, solar panels, efficiency software and batteries from China.

Finally, Trump wants to slash the State Department and foreign aid budgets and make it harder for people to immigrate to America, particularly Muslims. This opens the way for China to expand its influence across the developing world and signals the smartest math and science students in the world to start their start-ups overseas and not in America.

[NBC News reported](#) last week that applications from foreign students, notably from China, India and the Middle East, “are down this year at nearly 40 percent of schools that answered a recent survey by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.”

So you tell me that Trump is not a Chinese agent. The only other explanation is that he’s ignorant and unread — that he’s never studied the issues or connected the dots between them — so Big Coal and Big Oil easily manipulated him into being their chump, who just tweeted out their talking points to win votes here and there — without any thought to grand strategy. Surely that couldn’t be true?

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