

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

By Steve Russell, US Congressman

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Madam Speaker, with trade deals on the horizon, President Obama has asked Congress to grant him trade promotional authority, also called fast track, to “write the rules for the world’s economy.” This measure would allow the President to pass sweeping trade partnerships without the input of the American people through their elected representatives in the normal process. Despite the various myths circulating about TPA, I sincerely believe that it is not in the best interest of our Nation, as written at this time.

You have heard it said that a vote against TPA is a vote against international trade, but actually, a vote against TPA is a vote for a better construct and trade agreement.

I am a strong supporter of trade when deals are negotiated strategically in the best interest of the United States economically, militarily, and diplomatically. With the President leaving office in just months, I have serious concerns about the rapid pace and content of any deal that could have decades of implication.

Many have said TPA will strengthen our international relationships, and that may be, but while TPA would fast-track the Trans-Pacific Partnership, in specific, currently being negotiated by the President with 11 other Pacific nations, I am not convinced that this is a partnership that must be done in haste before the President leaves office.

We currently trade with 6 of the 11 other members. Our vital yet delicate relationship with China—a country not included in the Trans-Pacific Partnership— would likely be damaged by a rivalry for economic influence

in the region. The Trans-Pacific Partnership rewards nations with serious human rights violations while slighting our faithful trade partners with shared values in Europe. While I support the lifting of trade barriers and promoting better standards of living, I believe we must do the right track, not the fast track.

Others have claimed TPA will strengthen national security. On this point we should take careful note. The President has used dangerous and isolating language regarding China, with words coming from the White House like “hegemony” and “containment” to ask for the TPA, or the trade promotional authority, but we must note that China is not our enemy. Therefore, we should not put it on the path to become one.

By isolating China, we could easily transform our capabilities-based defense strategy to a threat-based one, with all of the implication and decades of effort that that would entail. It would affect all of our future defense spending and could even begin Cold War II. The trade promotional authority can be granted and trade agreements inked without making China excluded, or worse, our enemy. We need to use the next 20 months to repair the relationships as we move towards better trade agreements.

The trade promotional authority, some say, gives Congress a seat at the negotiating table. But the TPA allows Congress to set broad objectives for negotiation— and that comes at a high price. Under the trade promotional authority, Congress sacrifices its authority to make any changes on the final deal, and they are left with a simple “yes” or “no” vote.

I believe the American people deserve their voice in trade agreements which impact all of our livelihoods and affect all of our families’ finances. And while trade is vital to economic opportunity and our international friendships, I cannot support granting the President permission in light of these concerns with trade promotional authority.

Madam Speaker, America has long been fascinated with China. From the time of Columbus, who sought to find a western approach to China and

instead discovered America, we have been drawn to its ancient culture and its pulled into a Canton port in 1748. Forty years later, we began free trade with the Cantonese.

The first mention of China obtaining a favored nation status was actually as early as 1844, when we signed the Treaty of Wanghia. The way seemed open to engage China and her market. But there were concerns. Wrote one negotiating diplomat regarding this treaty:

“It is the most uncivilized and remote of all nations . . . it is in an isolated place outside the pale, solitary, and ignorant. Not only are the people entirely unversed in the forms of edicts and laws, but if the meaning be rather deep, they would probably not even be able to comprehend. It would seem that we must make our words somewhat simple.”

What is amusing is that the diplomat was Chinese, and his comments were directed toward the United States.

China moved ahead slowly and cautiously with its relations with the West. The interplay of Western covetousness with Chinese reluctance kept the door to China at a mere crack. European attempts to force the crack with opium and acquisition of port cities broadened the natural distrust.

Unlike demands of Europe, though, the United States wanted trade, not territory. U.S. Ambassador Burlingame was able to secure the first treaty that China ever made with any Western nation in 1861, and China was regarded as an equal. Chinese workers began to flock to the United States and literally began to move mountains in California as economic opportunity thrived.

Unfortunately, the goodwill of Lincoln faded in just one generation. The plundering of Chinese port cities by European competitors changed how Americans began to view China. The flood of Chinese immigrants to California became an easy target for any setback on its economic ascent. Equals were now called coolies. Racism reached such a height that in 1882 the United States Congress—this body— passed and the President signed

the first ever act that excluded a specific race on immigration. We did not even make any pretense about it, calling it the Chinese Exclusion Act. The provisions remained in effect for nearly 60 years.

As these events played out, Commodore Perry of the United States Navy entered Tokyo in 1850 and demanded that Japan “open up.” The Japanese obliged.

Japan embarked on a stunning modernization program, where China was reluctant. In an incredible span of only 50 years, Japan adopted Western technology, governance, law, industry, and military doctrines. Her rise from mystic feudalism to world power alarmed the West. In response, the goodwill of Lincoln towards China would take hold again in the form of his youthful personal secretary, John Hay, now an older, wiser, and towering figure of respect serving as the Secretary of State in 1900.

Hay saw the best way to compete with Japan would be to open up China to trade while protecting her territory. Hays’ open-door policy was widely heralded across the globe as the solution to imperial Japanese ascendancy. This would have long-lasting implication, but one important side effect was to restore U.S.-Chinese relations. Hay even secured a guarantee from Japan in 1908 to respect China’s “open door,” independence, and territory. It would last only 7 years.

As China moved to become more enlightened to the West with Sun Yatsen’s revolution in self-governance in China, Imperial Japan made what was known as the 21 Demands during World War I.

Great Britain and U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan moved quickly to prevent Japan from attempting to make China its own protectorate. American-Chinese relations warmed even further when the United States declared China’s right to autonomy with tariffs and trade in 1928.

As once-warm Japanese relations with the United States turned sour over Imperial Japanese policy in China regarding Manchuria, America established what became the Stimson doctrine, which refused to recognize Japanese acquisitions in China and upheld China's rights to its own sovereignty.

The 1930s saw a mercurial Imperial Japan plunder China, pull out of the League of Nations, and commit horrific atrocities in Nanking and Hong Kong. The U.S. responded by calling for a global quarantine against Japan in defense of China in 1937. China's own struggles internally with Mao Zedong's Communists paled in comparison to losing its industrial heart and its coast to the Imperial Japanese army.

By 1941, America was sending lendlease war material and economic aid to China in her defense. American volunteer pilots cut dashing figures as they flew American P-40 Warhawks for the Chinese Air Force as the famed Flying Tigers.

Ultimately, America's defense of China led it to be attacked at Pearl Harbor and resulted in a brutal Pacific and Chinese theater of war during World War II.

The United States committed an entire effort in China, with "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell as the commanding general; the building of the Burma Road; and by training, equipping, and launching a Chinese Army to attack Japanese forces. Immigration restrictions that were imposed in 1882 were now finally repealed. America had sympathy for China's struggle.

By war's end, China was an important partner and ally. Her struggle did not end, however. Ripped again internally by civil war once the Japanese were defeated, China would be led by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party.

The United States did not recognize Communist China, but neither did it materially aid fleeing Nationalist Chinese on the continent. A period of

isolation and strained relations with the United States began once again under Mao.

In 1949, China began to arm Communists in French Indochina. The U.S. became embroiled in a deadly struggle with North Korea and countered her assault in the south with an attack that pushed them all the way north to the Yalu River on the Chinese border.

Alarmed, China struck back. For the first time since 1900, Americans and Chinese were fighting each other. By 1953, an uneasy line had settled on the Korean Peninsula. Chinese relations remained cool with the West, but were not always promising with the Soviet Russia. When the U.S. fought in Vietnam, China continued to arm and send troops to the Communist government of Ho Chi Minh.

Then a series of odd events from 1969 to 1971 brought Americans and Chinese back to warmer relations in the most unlikely way. When Soviet Russia attacked outposts on the northern border of China, Mao Zedong reassessed relationships with the United States.

He reasoned that China could not be isolated by both world powers. Overtures from President Nixon in his inaugural address and a series of ping-pong matches created dialogue for the first time in decades.

In 1971, Henry Kissinger went on a secret mission to China, opening the way for Nixon's visit with Mao. Who would have thought that the man that shunned the United States in favor of communism and the President that built his reputation on fighting communism would both come to realize that our nations, despite their differences, needed each other.

Mainland China was now officially recognized by the United Nations. The U.S. set up diplomatic offices. Trade agreements opened. Relations warmed by the 1980s, with state visits from both countries. As the horizon brightened and the Chinese people hoped, the Chinese Government cracked down on dissidents in Tiananmen Square. The U.S., alarmed, imposed sanctions and restrictions.

Tensions loomed through the 1990s, culminating with the U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, in 1999, during the Kosovo campaign.

Calmer heads prevailed and tensions eased. By 2001, trade restrictions were loosened once again. China pledged a deep commitment to fight the war on terror and committed material aid in great amounts for the effort.

By 2006, China-U.S. relations deepened under the strategic economic dialogue. Business in both countries increased as commerce offered great economic opportunity for both countries.

On the verge of a bright future, we now see today with timidity and fear, where we should see opportunity and favor with regard to China.

China needs us, and we need China Speaker, a week of a barrage of negative press on China, covering everything from hedging them on trade, to condemning them and their development of island outposts in the China Sea, to framing them up as the new military threat that must be checked by the United States.

Dialogue and diplomacy are cheaper than tanks and tomahawks. Does the United States really wish to believe that we can leave a capabilities-based military to create some new threat-based military and it would be in our favor?

While China is not our enemy, we could certainly set the conditions to make them one in the future. It would be a tragic mistake. It would devour our diplomacy, drain our defense, and diminish our domestic priorities.

Worse, it could set the course for some future horrific conflict between dozens of friendly nations that we currently trade with, including China—including China. Where is the dialogue on including China in the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

I have not heard it from this Chamber or the White House. Sure, we claim they can join if they meet the standard, only after we use every anti-

Chinese statement in trying to make the case for the trade promotion authority. That is not very reassuring.

Some say we must not include China at all in the Trans-Pacific Partnership because of their human rights record. Others object because they are a Communist nation. Others cite the fact that China has been our former enemy.

Well, here are some thoughts to ponder. If we can forgive Germany and Japan for horrific human rights violations in World War II, can we not reach out to China? If we can embrace former enemies who reformed their existing Communist governments, such as Vietnam, can we not reach out to China?

If we can turn former enemies, such as Great Britain, Canada, Mexico, Spain, the Philippines, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Japan, and Vietnam, into our top trading partners, can we not also reach out to China?

China needs petroleum and natural gas, and we have plenty of it. We have both ready to export. China wants to lay thousands of miles of road in ambitious projects for her commerce. We have the raw materials for asphalt, industry to make their road-paving machines, and colleges to educate their engineers.

Madam Speaker, we need China; 3.8 million Chinese nationals live and work in the United States. That is more than the population of my home State of Oklahoma. China constitutes our greatest trading partner, working with thousands of businesses that bolster our economy and better our quality of life. Our peoples are historically and deeply intertwined. We must proceed with wisdom and caution.

While we love trade and while we love economy, we can work out differences, rather than magnify them and deepen suspicion and concern. Instead, we can dialogue.

The same standards that people often cite with regard to China and how she is stealing technologies or making shoddy goods were the same charges that we leveled against Japan in the 1960s and South Korea in the 1980s; yet we no longer have those concerns about those allies today with their incredible effort, economy, and technology.

Our peoples are historically and deeply entwined, the United States and China, and we must work hard to maintain that.

Madam Speaker, I would hope that our colleagues and our President would temper the rhetoric with regard to discussions on trade and using it as some new effort to hedge or contain China, rather than to embrace and trade with that nation.

Whatever differences we may have can be worked out in the spirit and good will of Lincoln.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.