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Americans Would Rather Pay More Than Buy Cheaper Products from China

The American public's opinion of Communist China has taken a beating as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. A [new poll from FTI Consulting](#), conducted May 12-14, indicates that Americans not only blame China's duplicity for the early spread of the virus, but they are now willing to pay more for goods rather than purchase goods "made in China." The virus, which produces the flu-like illness known as COVID-19 and has killed thousands of Americans, originated in Wuhan, China, the location of an infectious disease lab known to be working on coronaviruses.



The poll reveals that 78 percent of Americans would shell out more money for a good to avoid one imported from China. Forty percent even say they will no longer buy a product made in China, which will be very difficult, since goods made in Red China are ubiquitous on the shelves of American retailers. Fifty-five percent of Americans do not believe that the Chinese will live up to their promise in recent trade deals to buy more products made in America.

It is not that Americans are against all trading with businesses in foreign countries. In contrast with the antipathy toward the Chinese, only 22 percent have vowed not to buy from India (another Asian nation, thus providing evidence that anti-Asian bigotry has little to do with the negative feelings toward China). Only 17 percent say they will refuse to buy goods made in Mexico. Twelve percent boycott goods made in a European country.

President Donald Trump told Fox Business that "there are many things we could do — we could cut off the whole relationship." He has even suggested lowering the number of student visas issued to college students from China. He wants to end the practice of importing supplies from China, and instead make many of those items (such as medications) in the United States.

Keith Krach, undersecretary for economic growth, energy and the environment at the U.S. Department of State, told Reuters that the United States has been working to reduce its reliance on supply chains from China for the past few years, but "we are now turbo-charging that initiative. I think it is essential to understand where the critical areas are and where critical bottlenecks exist."

Among the ways that product manufacturing could be brought back to the United States from China is through tax incentives and outright subsidies.

"Free trade" advocates often argue that importing goods from other countries is of such great benefit to American consumers because of lower prices and the fact that there are certain products that would not be available in the American market otherwise. This argument is accurate as far as it goes, but as the FTI Poll indicates, Americans now believe that there are other considerations besides getting goods cheaper. One unnamed U.S. official noted, "All the money that people think they made by making deals



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with China before, now they've been eclipsed many-fold by the economic damage from the coronavirus."

Trade can certainly benefit both parties in the transaction, but "free trade" advocates often elevate those benefits above all other considerations. President Trump tweeted last year, before the pandemic, "Our country has lost, stupidly, trillions of dollars with China over many years. They have stolen our intellectual property at a rate of hundreds of billions of dollars a year, and they want to continue. I won't let that happen. We don't need China and, frankly, would be far better off without them."

Those who argue for "free trade" often assert that even if a foreign country subsidizes its own industry so the prices of its products are so cheap that they can undercut American producers, that just benefits the American consumer, and we should be happy about getting a better deal. But that is not free enterprise, and it is extremely short-sighted. Destroying an American industry in exchange for cheaper products today often leads to a dangerous dependence on goods manufactured in countries such as China, a place with a government clearly hostile to the United States. For one example, the Chinese have even threatened to cut off sales of ingredients for critical medicines for the U.S. market as a way to retaliate against America.

This dependence on Red China for life-saving drugs cannot be a wise policy to continue.

It should also be made clear that what is often called "free trade" is really government-managed trade through trade deals between, or among, nations that have made the deal. These trade deals usually lead to the creation of regulations (and super-national agencies to enforce them) that infringe on the national sovereignty of our nation. The modern European Union super-state has become increasingly oppressive, to the point that the United Kingdom exited the deal, and rumblings of similar discontent are heard in other member nations of the EU. Yet, the EU began as a simple trade agreement among six nations in Europe, dealing with coal and steel.

This dependence upon China, all for cheaper goods for American consumers and a bigger bottom line for some American companies, comes at the expense of the hollowing out of America's industrial base, the loss of millions of good-paying jobs for American citizens, and the building up of a totalitarian, hostile foreign power, should be reconsidered.

The FTI poll indicates that the American public has already moved in that direction. Will our political leaders in the United States move that way, as well?

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