

Mixed Results from Latest Sino/US Trade Talks

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Three days of talks in Beijing ended Wednesday afternoon local time, details so far not released by either side.

Media reports are mixed. Increased Chinese purchases of US products and cutting import duties, reportedly offered, leave major differences between both countries unaddressed.

[The NYT](#) said

“Beijing hopes (concessions offered) will be enough to let President Trump declare victory and end the trade war between the two largest economies,” adding:

“(I)t will be hard to ensure that China sticks to its commitments. That could make it a tough sell in Washington.”

Trump’s trade hawks want much more, China unlikely to agree on their tough demands in follow-up talks.

They include curbing its aim to become a global economic, industrial, and technological powerhouse, challenging US dominance. Buying more soybeans, liquified natural gas, and other US products isn’t enough to resolve trade differences between both countries.

Neither side indicated a willingness to alter their basic positions so far. Nor is it likely ahead. The US wants China and all other countries subordinating their sovereignty to US interests – what China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela, and other nations reject.

Major Sino/US differences are too longstanding and far apart to be resolved in 90 days. According to analyst **Vishnu Varathan**,

“(e)ven if a (bilateral) deal is cobbled together, the more strident trade hawks in the White House and Trump may not sign off.”

China isn’t likely to agree to their unacceptable demands. Beijing has its own, including over unacceptable US export and investment curbs, notably on what Washington consider dual-use technology related to military applications.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) said both sides narrowed differences “on purchases of US goods and services and widening access to China’s markets, though the two sides are far from striking a deal.”

When officials call talks “constructive,” watch out. It usually means major issues are unresolved, indeed the case between the US and China. Clearly three days of talks involving lower-level officials on both sides left both countries world’s apart on issues mattering most.

The best to come out of talks in Beijing is agreement on continuing them in Washington later this month, involving top negotiators from both countries.

Treasury Secretary Mnuchin reportedly wants China to commit to buying \$1.2 trillion of US goods and services over an unspecified period of time.

US trade representative **Robert Lighthizer** focuses mainly on structural issues, including China’s economic, industrial, and technological aims, subsidies to domestic companies, and protection for US intellectual property.

He may propose keeping US tariffs on Chinese goods in place, removing them only when Beijing meets Trump regime demands.

On Tuesday, a [China Daily](#) editorial said Beijing “made it clear that it will not seek a solution to the trade frictions by making unreasonable concessions, and any agreement has to involve give and take from both sides.”

China’s [Global Times](#) said three days of talks in Beijing made progress on some issues, “thorny (ones) such as economic policy changes...likely left for higher-level talks later.”

According to Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation research fellow **Mei Xinyu**, agreement on some issues are likely, “but let’s not be overly optimistic,” adding:

Trump and his negotiators “could walk back (from commitments made) as...before.” DLT wants a deal making it appear he got the best of things – similar to how he’s handling the southern border wall issue.

Talks in Beijing ended on a positive note, the toughest issues left unresolved. Reports indicated neither side changed their basic positions.

Major issues won’t be easily resolved, clearly not in 90 days.

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