



Trump stamps his foot

Last September, I stood on the Great Wall of China, begun in the 7th Century as a means of protection from nomadic invaders. Newly renovated for tourists on a day trip from Beijing, the section of the wall I traveled was beautiful in its East-West traverse of the hilly countryside, with elegant guard towers and temples interspersed randomly to break up the monotony of a rambling stone and dirt wall.

President Trump loves China's wall, romanticizing its beauty and purpose to bolster his pig-headed insistence on a border wall with Mexico, despite Democratic arguments that it's an antiquated strategy for curbing illegal border crossings. "The Democrats are trying to belittle the concept of a wall, calling it old-fashioned," Trump said. "The fact is there is nothing else that will work, and that has been true for thousands of years. It's like the wheel, there is nothing better."

Like nearly everything the president says, it's not true. According to blogger

Sara Lynn Hua, China's Wall "helped keep nomadic forces at bay, and also served as good lookout points for invasions. But in the end, the Great Wall was more of a moderate deterrent than an impenetrable fortress." In response to Trump's comments, Ishaan Tharoor from the Washington Post noted the Great Wall's significance is best understood "not as a security barrier, but as a work of political propaganda."

Exactly. Trump is now boxed in by his own rhetoric and the demands for a wall from conservative talk-show hosts, causing a government shutdown over Congress' refusal to provide \$5 billion to construct it. Public opinion is against him, however. According to a mid-December Quinnipiac poll, 55 percent of Americans oppose the border wall, and 62 percent oppose shutting down the government to fund it.

Maybe the public understands a Politico headline from August 2016 better than the President: "The World

Is Full of Walls That Don't Work."

Michael Dear points out Trump and others have been obsessed with border walls post-9/11. He concludes that, at best, walls "offer temporary respite from deeper tensions which usually remain unresolved by separation. At worst, walls can exacerbate the problems they were intended to solve. ... Walls do not work as permanent solutions to tough problems. Which is why, ultimately, they fall."

General John Kelly, Trump's outgoing Chief of Staff, told the Los Angeles Times the wall had been left behind long ago. "The president still says 'wall' — oftentimes frankly he'll say 'barrier' or 'fencing,' now he's tended toward steel slats. But we left a solid concrete wall early on in the administration, when we asked people what they needed and where they needed it."

Trump promptly tweeted his dissent early on New Year's Eve morning, in his usual juvenile style:

"An all-concrete Wall was NEVER ABANDONED, as has been reported by the media. Some areas will be all-concrete but the experts at Border Patrol prefer a Wall that is see-through (thereby making it possible to see what is happening on both sides). Makes sense to me!"

Lost in the battle over the wall are thousands of federal workers on unpaid furlough due to the budget impasse. The Office of Personnel Management suggested workers contact their landlords and request a deferred payment option or suggest a trade such as doing maintenance or painting instead of paying rent. It reminds me of Nevada's own Chicken Sue (Lowden), a failed U.S. Senate candidate, who suggested Nevadans would be fine without Obamacare. If they were unable to purchase health insurance they could revert to paying their doctor with chickens instead, as they did in the "olden days."

It would all be quite amusing if it were not reality in America in 2019. □

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