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# 'Uncle Trump' Finds Fans in China

By JAVIER C. HERNÁNDEZ and IRIS ZHAO NOV. 9, 2017



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President Trump and the first lady, Melania Trump, arriving in Beijing on Wednesday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

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BEIJING — They call him “Donald the Strong.” They heap praise on his family. They fawn over his rapid-fire tweets. They have even created an online fan club.

In America, President Trump faces a feisty press corps, damaging investigations into associates and sagging approval ratings.

But in China, where Mr. Trump arrived Wednesday, he has acquired a legion of admirers who hail him as a straight-talking politician and business mogul with a knack for deal-making.

“He’s true to himself,” said Dai Xiang, a resident of the eastern province of Jiangsu who belongs to an online group of more than 23,000 people that exchanges news and commentary about Mr. Trump. “He’s real, unlike other politicians.”

As in the United States, Mr. Trump can be a polarizing figure in China. He has his share of critics, who mock him as egoistical and erratic, and for fanning the war flames with North Korea. But he also has many ardent supporters, which is perhaps a surprising development for the leader of China’s biggest geopolitical rival.

They refer to him as “Uncle Trump,” “Grand Commander” and “Donald the Strong.” After Mr. Trump’s visit to the Forbidden City on Wednesday with President Xi Jinping, one fan wrote on social media, “Long live Emperor Trump!”

Mr. Trump’s Chinese fans praise his irrepressible style, his skill as an entertainer and his willingness to say what he thinks. Many also like the fact that he seems less inhibited than previous American presidents about recognizing China as a superpower and as an equal on the global stage.

And after years of American presidents lecturing China on issues like political prisoners and democracy, many also say they are relieved to see a leader who seems to care more about making deals than idealism.

They say Mr. Trump has changed the tone of America’s conversation with China.

“People are sort of tired of listening to that criticism,” said Xu Qinduo, a political commentator for China Radio International in Beijing. “Now we can talk to each other.”

It helps that the government-run news media has encouraged a positive portrayal of Mr. Trump, focusing on his warm relationship with Mr. Xi and his praise for China. Even those who do know about Mr. Trump’s troubles at home, including the investigation into his campaign’s ties to Russia, say these don’t detract from his admirable qualities.

“I’m not interested in the Russian investigation or his North Korea strategy,” said Zhang Changjiang, 43, an instructor at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. “His purpose is clear. He knows how to whet people’s appetite, how to make a scene and how to leverage his abilities.”

For many Chinese, Mr. Trump is a familiar type: the celebrity businessman. Successful, outspoken tycoons can win godlike status in China’s get-rich society, and Mr. Trump is no exception. His books, including “Trump Never Give Up,” received glowing reviews on Chinese websites. He is presented as a role model, a billionaire with his own empire of golf courses and gilded hotels.

Some believe his boardroom acumen will help him strike trade deals that will also benefit China’s economy.

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An ad in Shanghai for a Chinese magazine featuring President Trump. Aly Song/Reuters

“As a successful businessman, Trump definitely won’t ignore the huge size of China’s consumer base,” said Li Yang, 25, a designer.

Of course, not everyone is a fan. When asked, some Chinese said they worried that Mr. Trump is inflaming tensions with [North Korea](#), a longtime ally. Others are concerned by his past attacks on China on trade and intellectual property rights. Some described him as mercurial, saying that while he seems to be friendly now, that could suddenly change.

“Trump is a person of ambiguity,” said Sun Caihong, 38, a resident of Beijing. “His policy is not clear. He’s just trying to muddle along.”

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Others were more calculating.

“If he’s doing good for China, I like him,” said Liu Chunyu, 56, a deliveryman. “If not, I don’t like him.”

Even some of those who disagree with Mr. Trump’s policies see him as a refreshing iconoclast, willing to discard the tone of moral superiority that some previous American

leaders had held toward China, especially on human rights.

Many Chinese “have a strong revulsion and hostility toward ‘political correctness’ in Western society,” Chen Jibing, a political commentator in Shanghai, [wrote in a blog post](#) this week. “They see themselves in Trump.”

The Communist Party’s tight grip on information in China might be playing into Mr. Trump’s popularity, experts say. Stanley Rosen, a political science professor at the University of Southern California, said that the Chinese respect unpredictable, confident personalities, which in their own history would include figures like modern China’s founding father, Mao Zedong.

Mr. Trump is showing that he is spontaneous and “beholden to no one,” Mr. Rosen said.

Mr. Trump’s celebrity status also adds to his mystique. Before his election, he was already known in China as the star of “The Apprentice,” which could be viewed online.

Even his physical appearance has [drawn attention](#) — although not always in a flattering way. In lighthearted social media posts, his head of flaxen hair is juxtaposed with photos of roosters and pheasants.



**People's Daily, China** @PDChina

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4:58 PM · Nov 14, 2017

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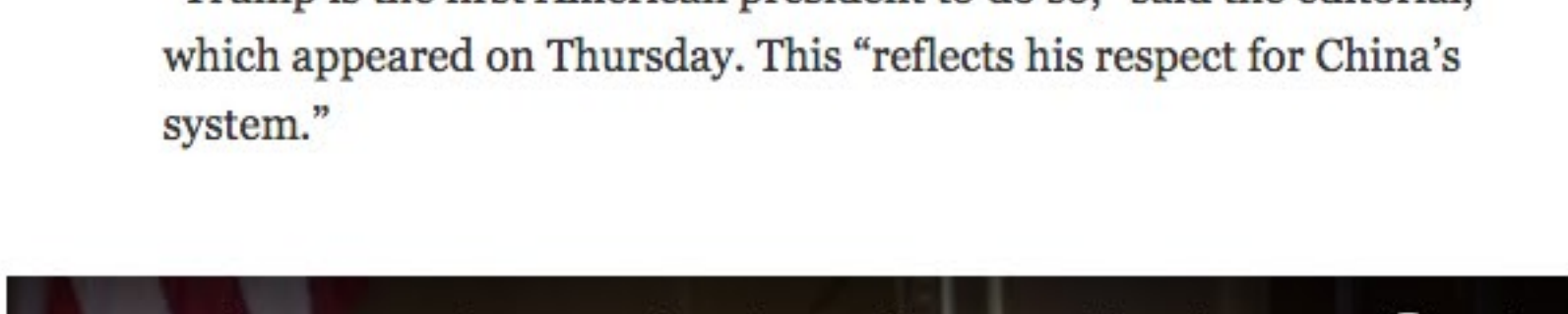
Mr. Trump’s most effective tool in winning over Chinese audiences may be his family. His daughter Ivanka, who started her own fashion brand, is [regarded as a role model](#) for young Chinese entrepreneurs. His 6-year-old granddaughter, Arabella, became a nationally known figure this year after [a video appeared of her singing in Chinese](#).

On Wednesday, Mr. Trump showed Mr. Xi another video of his granddaughter singing in Chinese, which was shared widely after it was posted online, attracting tens of millions of views in less than 24 hours.

Other Chinese take a more hard-nosed approach, embracing Mr. Trump because of the advantages that they see him offering to China. They regard an American retreat from global affairs as an opening for Beijing to extend its influence. They also say Mr. Trump has helped enhance China’s stature by treating Mr. Xi as an equal partner.

The Global Times, an ardently nationalist state-run tabloid, [praised Mr. Trump](#) for showing respect to Mr. Xi, such as when he called last month to congratulate Mr. Xi on winning a second five-year term as Communist Party leader.

“Trump is the first American president to do so,” said the editorial, which appeared on Thursday. This “reflects his respect for China’s system.”



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