

Draft – updated 1/09/19 – Karl Polzer

Our wall...



Their wall:



America, Build Up This Wall!

The “Mexican stand-off” over whether to build a border wall sadly embodies the narrow-mindedness of America’s political leaders and disrespects the creative potential of American capitalism. It’s an undeniable fact that Donald, Chuck, and Nancy may be thinking way too small to discern the proper dimensions of a win-win agreement that could profit the United States for centuries.

When it comes to border walls, our main rival is making us look very small and foolish. While politicians squabble over how much to spend on a wall (a “dead

weight loss” for those without economics training) or border security generally, China already is collecting mega-yuan in tourism dollars for theirs. With more than 2,500 years of experience in border walls, China’s leaders understand that the long-term value of a wall is making money by providing goods and services for visitors to look at it. [China’s wall](#) has an uneven history in keeping invaders, criminals, and drugs out. Mongols, Western imperialists, and opium sellers all found ways around it. But it could be a national cash register for a long time.

Re-focusing the dialogue from the short term (border security and keeping down the labor supply to help low-wage workers get raises) -- to the long term (centuries of tourism dollars) starts with basic arithmetic. How much do the Chinese make now from their wall? Though the internet doesn’t offer an instantaneous answer, a skillful analyst can estimate. Since the Great Wall is the most visited tourist destination in China, one can reasonably infer that it’s responsible for attracting a significant percentage of visitors – let’s say 10%, or, okay, maybe 5%.

According to [reliable sources](#) informative of the Chinese economy, “with other related industries, the country’s tourism industry contributed nine trillion yuan of GDP in 2017 – 11% of the total.” Nine trillion yuan is roughly a trillion U.S dollars (adjusting downward a bit to account for bad days and possible currency manipulation). Therefore, if the Great Wall contributes only a conservative 5% to total Chinese tourism revenue, that would equal roughly \$50 billion each year! That’s \$5 TRILLION dollars of revenue over a century. Not bad for communists just getting their legs in the international market.

The United States, which can be counted on to continue refining the art and science of capitalism, could do much better. After all, we beat the Chinese in most Olympic sports. If the American Empire lasts a mere 1,000 years, we could reasonably expect our wall to pull in more than \$50 trillion, even if we don’t do any better than China.

The paltry versions of a wall that our small-minded leaders are bickering over is estimated to cost somewhere between [\\$8 billion and \\$67 billion](#). A big, better structure, custom designed for centuries of tourism, could easily pay for itself in span of four congressional terms of office.

But wait a minute. This is not as easy as simply importing Chinese consultants to erect a replica of the Great Wall along the Rio Grande. Our wall would have to be uniquely American, and sensitive to our values and culture. China's Great Wall is far too elegant and symmetrical to express American capitalism's creative and destructive cycles and its immense advances since feudalism.

A national design competition is probably merited. But here are some thoughts to get started: America's southern wall should definitely be taller, wider, and greater in total mass than China's and studded with a fearful array of weapons ranging from machine guns found in typical Texas households to weapons of mass destruction proven to produce shock and awe. Far-thinking engineers might push for weapons able to fire in all directions in the event that climate change makes much of the United States less desirable to inhabit than territories currently to the north or south - and we decide to re-invade Mexico for more elbow room. If higher temperatures dry up the Rio Grande altogether, the wall would be even more necessary to thwart invasion since the water would be gone. It also could help future researchers by providing an indication of where the river once flowed. The ditch left behind could be useful for drainage.

State and local leaders could zone land abutting the wall for commercial purposes, offering options from improved Taco Bells to fine cuisine experiences, hotels, spas, condos, casinos, miniature golf and golf courses. The hospitality industry would flourish. Hospitals could be placed at 10-mile intervals to provide the best, most procedure intense health care available on the planet with profits from medical tourism available to increase domestic insurance coverage.

Asked for peer review, colleagues with substantial expertise in business, law, and mental health, respectively, who hold diametrically opposed and irreconcilable political views, gave this proposal enthusiastic reviews, but thought it was incomplete. Why not add fields of solar panels and wind mills, and novel forms of advertising? Servers for bitcoin mining? What about an endless mall inside the wall (before the Chinese think of it)?

Building a wall of this scale could also provide immigrants with a way to work their way toward citizenship. After two years of demonstrated hard work in a federal construction corps, asylum seekers could be given special green cards. Members of the corps would be provided with subsidized health care and those

who perished would never be buried inside the wall as was the case in parts of China.

The American government could make even more money if it sold non-voting shares to Mexico and Central American nations. A “Share the Wall” program, for example, could enrich Guatemala by entitling it to 5% of wall profits in exchange for covering 10% of wall construction costs. Given the time value of money, this could be a gold mine for developing nations and help eliminate the poverty and crime now driving populations north. If the wall along the southern border succeeds as planned, the United States could work with Canada to build a bigger and better one along our northern borders.

But none of this can happen if our political leaders refuse to work together and see what’s possible in the bigger picture.

Karl Polzer is founder of the Center on Capital & Social Equity – www.inequalityink.org

Sources of facts used in this article:

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