

Storyline of U.S.-China trade war

2016

Candidate Trump lays down his plan to strike a better deal with China and also threatens imposition of Sections 201 and 301 tariffs on China once he comes to power.

2017

President Trump orders a review of the U.S. trade deficit and its causes. He also orders a Section 301 investigation of Chinese intellectual property practices.

2018

U.S. imposes a 25% tariff on all steel imports and 10% tariff on aluminium imports. U.S. also bans ZTE, a Chinese company, from doing business in the U.S. The U.S. imposes tariffs on Chinese goods worth \$34 billion.

In retaliation, China imposes tariffs on 128 products (worth \$3 billion) and 25% tariff on 106 products (worth \$50 billion). China imposes 17.6% anti-dumping duty on sorghum from U.S. China also files a WTO dispute against the U.S. safeguard duty on solar panels.

In total, the U.S. imposes tariff on Chinese goods worth \$250 billion and China imposes tariffs on U.S. goods worth \$110 billion in 2018. Both countries initiate bilateral discussions. China removes tariffs from U.S. auto parts and resumes imports of soybeans from U.S.

U.S. imposes tariff on total Chinese goods worth \$200 billion. It also places Huawei on its entity list, banning sales to Huawei. Later, it agrees to give a license to Huawei. U.S. increases tariffs again, citing that China tried renegotiating the deal and backing out of its commitments. Amidst the threat to move faster in the trade deal, the U.S. declares China a “currency manipulator.”

China imposes tariffs on U.S. goods worth \$60 billion. China bans all variants of fentanyl. China also establishes its own 'unreliable entities' list. China launches a WTO dispute against U.S.' tariff amounting to \$300 billion.

2019

Both countries go on and off with the trade talks due to differences in certain areas, like Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection etc. Later, the countries agree to work on the trade deal and release the lists of tariff exemptions. Both countries decide on the principles and final aspects of the deal. The deal gets finalised on 13 December 2019. It is signed on 15 January 2020 and will come into effect on 14 February 2020.

Source: Centre for Trade and Investment Law (2020)