Lawyer hopeful on US-China trade despite current difficulty

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A US-based lawyer who has represented Chinese companies for decades said he still holds a positive attitude toward US-China trade relations even though the current trade war between the two countries is worsening.  
"The US and China both benefit too much from each other for either side to want to harm the other. It doesn't make sense; we are closely tied together," said Geoffrey Sant, a partner in the trial department of New York-based law firm Dorsey & Whitney LLP. "I think a lot of tough talk is really just negotiations, and we will have a solution, hopefully, this year.''  
Sant represents some of the world's largest banks, investment companies, and businesses in both litigation and transactional matters. His litigation successes include defeating a securities litigation against a Chinese company and persuading the judge to impose sanctions against the law firm that filed the lawsuit.  
He said it's a huge mistake to think of trade as competition with one side winning and one side losing. "That's not true at all,'' Sant said.  
"When one side does well economically, the other side also benefits economically. That's completely obvious," he said. "When the US invents something, like the internet, that could benefit the whole world. When China develops new products, the US benefits. You don't lose something because China has made an advance."  
Talking about the US government's attitude toward Made in China 2025, Sant said the government thinks it's threatening because it misreads it.  
"I think a lot of times, the US has a very big misunderstanding about China,"he said. "It's easy when you translate a document to misinterpret the document. So that's why it's really important to have professionals explain to the US side what the (Chinese) document is really saying."  
According to a Rhodium Group report released in June, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) in the US plummeted in the first half of this year. Chinese companies completed acquisitions and greenfield investments worth $1.8 billion, a drop of more than 90 percent from the first half of 2017 and the lowest level in seven years, the report said.  
Because of policy changes on both sides, Sant said a lot of Chinese companies invested in the US are concerned. "They are worried about 'is the US still friendly to us', so there is some pull back from Chinese investment in the US," he said. "Meanwhile, I think some US companies are concerned about investing in China because they feel maybe people are angry about the trade war and they won't be as friendly toward US products.  
"So I think both sides are a little nervous. But once this is resolved, once the negotiation is done, I think there will be a lot of investment because people are waiting right now who want to make investments in both sides," Sant said.

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