

Synopsis of Problem Areas and Resolutions for 2016-17

PROBLEM AREA I: CHINA

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement with the People's Republic of China.

Among the possible areas could be: Reforming segments of U.S./China trade; working with China to increase respect for human rights; working with China to better understand and manage its territorial ambitions in the South China Sea and other parts of Asia; how to work with China to best mitigate ongoing concerns over Taiwan; how to work with China to ensure sustainable energy and resource policies; how best to protect indigenous groups within China; how best to handle ongoing concerns over Tibet; how best to work together on the threat posed by world terrorism and many others. Given the amount of literature on the topic, and the number of policy experts opining about China – teams can be assured of finding case ideas in a wide range of areas, with novel and unique Affirmatives being proposed by policy experts almost monthly. The topic's literature base ensures a dynamic range of case options. Negatives will have ample ground to explore the solvency of diplomatic or economic engagement; the effects of changes in China policy on surrounding Asian nations; the implications for U.S. allies in the region should any change to U.S. policy toward China occur and the effect of change on the U.S. in light of its other national interests and obligations. Case specific disadvantages, again, given the literature base, will move beyond the generic, allowing for case advantages to be weighed by countervailing arguments – including arguments pertaining to the crack-down on rights within China; land use arguments, and specific species protection disadvantages; implications for China/Taiwan relations; labor specific disadvantages; and disadvantages dealing with economic issues specific to plan action (inflation, currency collapse, etc., all directly related to case specific action in China. Counterplan and Kritik ground will be fertile with both case specific and generic arguments in play. There will be plenty of case specific debate, given the literature base on the topic and the number of international experts that write on China there will be no shortage of clashing ideas on how best to engage China, giving teams many possibilities to find proposals for action directly counter to the Affirmative's. These clashing ideas would affect debate over specific solvency options and case specific advantages. With China rising in stature on the national stage, the resolution is education, timely, and necessary to debate.

PROBLEM AREA II: TREATIES

Resolved: The United States federal government should ratify or accede to one or more of the following: Convention on the Rights of the Child, Law of the Sea Treaty, Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

America's status as a global advocate for peace, cooperation, and human rights is often put to the test when multilateral treaties are on the table. In particular, the U.S.

has been criticized for its failure to ratify several widely-adopted agreements, notably the Law of the Sea Treaty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. Affirmatives on this topic could advocate unconditional ratification of any of the listed treaties, or could alternatively advocate ratification with reservations excepting individual provisions. Cases could leverage not only the advantages specific to each treaty, but also critical and policy-based objections to American exceptionalism and unilateral action. The list of five treaties allows negatives to develop deep case arguments against each treaty. Counterplan options could include alternate actors and solvency mechanisms as well as reservations against particular provisions of the treaty. There is rich disadvantage ground in the areas of international relations, economic and political leadership, environmental impacts and human rights. Critical positions arise from issues of American exceptionalism, exporting capitalist values and the implications of gender and child issues.

PROBLEM AREA III: INDIA

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement with the Republic of India.

Economic engagement between the United States and the Republic of India, is a topic that frequently dominates discussion among political leaders in both nations. At the same time, U.S. trade policy is an issue that often occupies rhetoric of both major U.S. political parties. Multiple aspects of economic relations with India provide ground for affirmative advocacy of change in present policy. Affirmative case areas include: removal of barriers that restrict trade, promotion of India's agriculture industry, increased space exploration cooperation, increased emphasis on technology transfer, and poverty relief assistance. Negative teams have the option of relying on economic claims related to trade issues, problems associated with dual-use technology, arguments related to other nations, such as Pakistan and China as targets for increased economic engagement. Solvency claims for negative can be based on arguments related to cooperation of business organizations, political division in India, and U.S. opposition based on economic concerns such as domestic unemployment. Disadvantages include political scenarios based on how implementation would affect U.S. election outcomes, domestic U.S. backlash, hegemony arguments with particular emphasis on China and Russia, adverse reaction by Pakistan's leaders, and environmental impacts associated with increased economic growth in India. Finally, the presence of humanitarian and gender equality issues currently occurring in the Republic of India provide ground for a host of critical arguments. Negative teams opting to challenge the resolution on critical grounds can claim that increased U.S./India economic engagement will exacerbate gender equity problems in India, result in increased cultural imperialism, and cause cultural appropriation in the United States.

PROBLEM AREA IV: EXPORT CONTROLS

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially strengthen its export controls on dual-use technology toward one or more of the following: China, Israel, Russia, Taiwan.

In an era where both domestic and international technology transfers are becoming necessary for a variety of reasons many continue to inquire if current export controls are adequate to protect U.S. technology from misuse by foreign powers. The U.S. faces many challenges in export control policy including threats from nations who illegally acquire technology. A fair division of ground exists in the literature base between those who want to prioritize security concerns and protect technology, and those who want to reduce export controls to stimulate growth in the technology sector. With this divide in mind, the topic offers debaters the opportunity to investigate a unique foreign policy tool, which has been only debated in small areas of past topics such as Russia, China, or arms sales. Affirmatives would have opportunities to investigate the role U.S. technology exports play in international terrorism, proliferation, security, and human rights issues. For example, they could strengthen controls on computers and microprocessors to China or Taiwan to prevent missile proliferation; stop all current or future transfers of policing technology to Israel, or eliminate transfers of microprocessors and database technology to Russia. Negatives would have the ability to highlight the impacts of export controls on trade, international relations, and domestic technological competitiveness. For example, negative teams would have ample ground to argue relations disadvantages to each of the countries listed in the topic, or negatives could argue business confidence disadvantages. Negatives would have access to counterplans on alternate export control mechanisms like sanctions or quid-pro-quo. Solvency debates will also be diverse on both the type of technologies and the types of controls.

PROBLEM AREA V: ASIAN PACIFIC RIM

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Southeast Asia represents a new and well-balanced topic area. The ten nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN: Brunei Darussalam, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. These nations constitute a growing and vital region of the world. If the member nations were considered a single economy, ASEAN would be the world's seventh largest economy. Though ten very different countries, the member nations are joined by a commitment to consensus building. Since President Obama announced in 2010 that the United States would shift its foreign policy to focus more on Asia-Pacific, now known as the "Asia Pivot," this area has received more interest. The topic focuses on the United States increasing its economic engagement to this vital region, and for good reason. ASEAN neighbors to China, India, Japan, and South Korea, and one third of the world's maritime trade passes through the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. In addition, there are several important issues facing the region, including:

sustained economic growth, territorial rights, and environmental and human impacts of development. Affirmative cases could focus on building a free-trade agreement with ASEAN, response to maritime piracy, climate adaptation, development assistance, infrastructure investment, increase financial integration, and telecommunications and cybersecurity support. Negative positions would include a the cost and impact of free-trade agreements between the U.S. and other countries, discussion of the U.S.'s role of the region, discussion of China's role in the region, other forms of engagement with ASEAN such as cultural or military, territorial tensions, human trafficking, the effects of development on the environment, and the impact of globalization and development on human rights in the region.