Considering China

A Topic Proposal

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Proposed Resolutions

1. Resolved: That the United States federal government should substantially change its foreign policy toward China in one of these areas: trade policy or defense posture.

2. Resolved: That the United States federal government should substantially change its trade policy towards the People’s Republic of China.

3. Resolved: That the United States federal government should substantially change its defense posture towards the People’s Republic of China.

4. Resolved: That the United States federal government should substantially change its foreign policy toward the People’s Republic of China.

5. Resolved: That the United States federal government should substantially change either its trade policy or its defense posture toward the People’s Republic of China.

6. Resolved: That the United States federal government should substantially change its trade policy toward the Peoples Republic of China in one of the following areas: Agriculture, direct foreign investment, environmental protection, or the protection of intellectual property.
Introduction

There can be no question that China and the relationship between it and the United States is a subject worthy of debate. According to Michael O’Hanlon of the 21st Century Security, “China has both the world’s second largest economy and second largest military budget, and is undertaking the world’s most rapid program of military improvement (Bush, 2015).”

Additionally, Bonnie Glaser of the Center for Strategic and International Studies points out that China “…does seek to reduce U.S. influence and negate American alliances, even as it asks for restraint by others when it comes to China’s “core interests. (Bush, 2015).” Additionally, as both the U.S. and China’s interests continue to intersect, Kevin Rudd, Senior Fellow, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, points out that: “The future relationship between China and the United States is one of the mega-changes and mega-challenges of our age. China’s rise is the geopolitical equivalent of the melting polar ice caps – gradual change on a massive scale that can suddenly lead to dramatic turns of events (Rudd, 2015).”

Given the size of the Chinese economy and the status of U.S. hegemony, it is important to consider the Chinese government’s view of the United States, as Rudd notes: “These are reflected in the following five-point consensus circulated among the Chinese leadership during 2014, summarizing internal conclusions about U.S. strategic intentions:

• To isolate China;
• To contain China;
• To diminish China;
• To internally divide China; and
• To sabotage China’s leadership (Rudd, 2015).”

These thoughts have led to “a lot of mutual distrust,(Georgetown, 2014),” between both nations. Andrew J. Nathan, Class of 1919 Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, explains
further: “The relationship between U.S. and China today is intensely two-sided with important areas of cooperation as well as areas of conflict. It is overlain by a very deep mistrust on both sides where China sees everything that the U.S. does as an attempt to undermine Chinese interests while the U.S. tend to see everything China does as a kind of long term strategy to push back American interests (Nathan, 2015).”

Even though there is inherent mistrust in the relationship, the United States must find a way to work with China, it’s simply too big to ignore as Treasury Secretary Lew recently pointed out, noting: “In the almost four decades since it began market-oriented economic reform and turned to the global market, China’s per capita income has grown 19-fold, lifting 680 million Chinese out of poverty. China’s share of global GDP has increased from about 3 percent in 1990 to roughly 13 percent in 2014 (Lew, 2015).” Additionally, China owns over “$1.2 trillion of the U.S.’ debt (Murse, 2015), giving the nation a substantial stake in the U.S. economy. Also, China remains the U.S.’ second largest trading partner, after Canada, with an annual trade deficit of some “$318 billion” in 2014, the last year for which figures were available (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 2014).

As a community, we have only debated China as a central topic once in our existence and that was 21 years ago. With China’s importance to the United States and its growing ascendancy on the world stage, the time has come for the United States for our community to help rethink America’s relationship with China.
Timeline and Interest

China is in the news nearly every day, with millions of pages of information published on the nation and its relationship with the United States each year. Simply Googling the word "U.S. China Relations" returns 222 million hits. There will be no lack of scholarly and popular literature on this topic. Nor will there be many requirements for teams to subscribe to expensive literature databases as so much of the material is available free on-line. Additionally, the relationship with China is an evolving one, impacting several areas of the federal government, the American defense posture, and the American economy each and every day.

Given the size of the literature base on the topic, it will probably be necessary to limit the topic into a few different subsets which would allow for predictable and limited ground for Affirmative and Negative teams alike.

Existing Programs

Foreign policy is largely created by the Executive and Legislative branches, and their subsequent agencies, of the U.S. government meaning that only the federal government has topical ground on the Affirmative side of the topic. Negative ground would be preserved through this clear division, and the Negative side of the debate would still have access to counterplan ground, minor repairs, and various other strategies.

Range and Scope

Numerous Affirmative cases exist within the topic literature, perhaps too many to debate the topic as it was worded in 1995 with only a “change in foreign policy” being specified. Ideally, the topic should be limited to various sub-sets which will allow for good debate, but still allow for Negatives to find cases specific evidence so that case-debates could be had in most instances.
Possible case areas are as follows: Cybersecurity, Defense Cooperation, terrorism prevention, or agricultural trade.

**Defense Posture**

As recently as 2013, there was a growing commitment between China and the United States to cooperate more fully on matters of defense and national security. Then Secretary of Defense Chuck Haegel went as far to say “The United States welcomes and supports the rise of a prosperous and responsible China that helps solve regional and global problems…(McClure, 2013).” However, since then Chinese expansion in the Spratly Islands, United States military exercises in the Philippine Islands, a renewed tension over increased U.S. cooperation with Vietnam, as well as increased support of the U.S. for missile defense in Taiwan, have done much to turn the cooperative outlook from one of optimism to one of pessimism. The matter is not helped by China’s lack of transparency in military matters, with Office of the Secretary of Defense noting in 2014: “However, China’s lack of transparency surrounding its growing military capabilities has increased concerns in the region about China’s intention (DoD, 2014)”

Cases under this subset could concern themselves with countering Chinese expansion in the Pacific, increasing U.S. – Chinese cooperation in the Pacific region – or in other regions of the world, or could establish programs of cooperation directly between the U.S. and Chinese militaries – especially those that deal with terrorism prevention.

Additionally, affirmative teams could consider any attempt to change defense posture toward China through this lens “While Beijing’s intentions remain unclear, there is little doubt that the United States confronts a potentially large-scale challenge to its security based on China’s ongoing build-up of its military capabilities. There is also little debate concerning China’s rise to great regional power status and, perhaps, over the next several decades,
potentially to the rank of major global power (Krepinevich and Work, 2007).” In response to the
growth of China, the U.S. has announced several changes to its own defense priorities in the
Pacific, including: “First is modernizing important alliances with Japan, the Philippines and
Australia, he said. Shear noted the new defense cooperation guidelines between the U.S. and
Japan, in addition to enhanced cooperation with the Philippines and the force posture agreement
with Australia that each allow rotational U.S. forces to be stationed on allied ground. Second,
DoD is adopting a “more geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically
sustainable defense posture throughout the region,” Shear said. Rotational deployments of littoral
combat ships to Singapore is the Navy’s first sustained presence in Southeast Asia since the U.S.
Navy Base at Subic Bay closed in the early 1990s, he pointed out. DoD also has enhanced in-
theater assets for greater visibility in the region by conducting port calls in the South China Sea,
flying regular regional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions, performing
exercises with allies and the ongoing U.S. ship presence in the region. Third, DoD helps regional
governments improve their maritime security capacities and domain awareness, such as helping
with the Philippines’ national coastal watch system, he said. Last, DoD is trying to “reduce the
risk of miscalculation and unintentional conflict with China through healthy but prudent military-
to-military engagement,” Shear said (Cronk, 2015).”

**Trade**

U.S. trade with China is at a critical juncture, “As the dominant power in the
global economic system, the U.S. now has important decisions to make about how it wants to
engage with China and how it would like China to engage with the world. Washington needs to
get this right, because its global leadership and overall trade competitiveness are at stake (Zimmerman, 2015)."

China is the second largest trading partner of the United States, so including trade in this topic would give Affirmatives ample ground. From the size of the U.S. trade deficit with China to U.S. companies using Chinese companies to build their products – Apple, for example – to allowing Chinese goods into our food supply, debate on trade could be all consuming. Some of the major issues existing in the realm of U.S.-China trade at this time include: Chinese direct foreign investment in the United States; the prohibitions on U.S. direct foreign investment in China; the human and civil rights of Chinese workers in American businesses in China; failure to protect intellectual property rights; and fulfilling World Trade Organization obligations. There are signs that China is interested in being more fully integrated into the world’s trade regimes, so there are good prospects for solvency.

Despite the fact that China is the second largest U.S. trade partner, problems have beset the relationship: “Yet, bilateral trade relations have become increasingly strained in recent years over a number of issues, including a large and growing U.S. trade deficit with China, resistance by China to appreciate its currency to market levels, China’s mixed record on implementing its WTO obligations, infringement of U.S. intellectual property (including through cyber espionage), and numerous Chinese industrial policies that appear to impose new restrictions on foreign firms or provide unfair advantages to domestic Chinese firms (such as subsidies) Morrison, 2015).”

Specific trade problems between the U.S. and China include an: “Extensive network of industrial policies that seek to promote and protect domestic sectors and firms, especially SOEs, deemed by the government to be critical to the country’s future economic growth”; as well as
“Targeting foreign firms with anti-competitive investigations in order to limit foreign market share of various industries in China; Failure to provide adequate protection of U.S. intellectual property rights (IPR) and (alleged) government-directed cyber security attacks against U.S. firms; Mixed record on implementing its obligations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its failure to date to join the WTO’s Government Procurement Agreement (GPA); and Intervention in currency markets to limit the appreciation of the renminbi (RMB) against the dollar (and other major currencies) in order to make China’s exports more globally competitive (Morrison, 2015).”

In the agricultural sector, China consumed $29.9 billion in trade in 2014 (USDA, 2015). Crops most in demand included: soybeans, distillers' grains, hides and skins, tree nuts, coarse grains, cotton and beef (USDA, 2015). The U.S. is also an importer of Chinese agricultural products, currently “eight out of 10 tilapia, 50% of the cod, and 70% of the apple juice” sold in the United States originates in China (Wilson Center, 2014). The current balance of agricultural trade between the U.S. and China makes China the #1 importer of American food stuffs.

Another area of potential affirmatives lies in the areas of investment between China and the United States. The overall balance of investment is low compared to the volume of trade between both nations, but: “Many analysts contend that an expansion of bilateral FDI flows could greatly expand commercial ties. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is the main U.S. federal agency that collects data on FDI flows to and from the United States.31 Its data show the stock of U.S. FDI in China through 2013 at $61.5 billion on a historical-cost basis (see Table 6) (Morrison, 2015).” Affirmatives could change trade policy in a way which allows for greater investment by China: “Many U.S. analysts contend that greater Chinese FDI in the United States, especially in “greenfield” projects (new ventures) that manufacture products or
provide services in the United States and create new jobs for U.S. workers, could help improve bilateral economic relations and might lessen perceptions among some critics in the United States that growing U.S.-China trade undermines U.S. employment and harms U.S. economic interests. A number of analysts note that China’s outward FDI has been growing rapidly since 2004 and is likely to continue in the years ahead. Such analysts contend that greater efforts should be made by U.S. policymakers to encourage Chinese firms to invest in the United States rather than block them for political reasons (Morrison, P.18).” Likewise, U.S. trade negotiators “have urged China to liberalize its FDI regime in order to boost U.S. business opportunities in, and expand U.S. exports to, China (Morrison, P.23).”

Changing trade policy toward China would give Affirmatives ample ground from which to launch attacks on the status quo and would provide for a wide-range of affirmative proposals, while allowing the negative to make case specific claims against those proposals.

**Negative Approaches**

The sheer volume of information that would be accessible to teams on any debate topic concerning China will guarantee a wide variety of negative approaches. For more traditional teams, there will be ample evidence to debate specific cases; specific solvency take-outs; and even inherency evidence – especially true given the changing nature of U.S.-China relations. More progressive teams will find a wide variety of disadvantages to run including the usual suspects of politics and spending, but also including a variety of relations disadvantages. Creative teams will be able to craft case-specific disadvantages exploring the downside to proposed policy changes.
Kritik literature will be abundant as well, for teams who wish to run those types of arguments. There is a wide variety of literature which examines China and its government through any number of philosophical systems. Also, the topic would raise issues of capitalism, democracy, human rights, socialism, and any number of other “isms,” for teams to explore. The topic would also invite any number of kritiks of international relations including threat construction, realism, neoliberalism, etc. Also, because the proposed topics would include discussion of the environment and the impact of potential policies upon it, teams could turn to Heidegger, eco feminism, environmental justice, queer ecology, and many more. There will be few limits to the number of kritiks we can expect to see on any of the topic wordings.

Counterplan ground will include both the traditional and specific plan inclusive and plan exclusive arguments – often precisely crafted to the cases, given the amount of information that exists on the topic. Common counterplans we could expect to hear on this topic would include consultation counterplans, having country X do the plan, having international organization Y do the plan, etc.

In short, a China topic lends itself to fertile negative ground, often case specific negative ground which will increase the depth and educational value of the debate experience for the debaters.

**Summing it Up**

China is one of the fastest growing nations in the world, a major U.S. trading partner, and a future hegemonic rival (if it’s not that already) – our community has not explored the dynamics of the U.S.-China relationship in 21 years, and a lot has changed since the last time we tackled it. By adopting the China topic we can help increase understanding of China and its policies which will be valuable to future generations as they attempt to navigate the complex relationship
between both nations. Additionally, the topic will allow students to access a wide variety of literature that will be topic specific, allowing for any number of creative but in-depth arguments and debate. Limiting the topic to three areas will both allow a wide variety of arguments and a more manageable topic. The last time we debate the issue, we had the entire breadth of U.S. foreign policy with China to consider, now that wouldn’t be manageable – given the explosion of information availability that has occurred since 1995. The topic will also be a dynamic one, with policy constantly shifting and with a new administration coming to power in 2016 we could see seismic shifts in policy – all of which will make for exciting, dynamic, and innovative debate. The topic would be accessible to all levels of debaters and to all schools who have a debate team, even if said program had no access to special databases and only had Google to rely on.
Definitions

**China:** Nation in eastern Asia, bordered by Russia and North Korea to the east; Russia and Mongolia to the north; Russia and Afghanistan to the west; and Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Laos, and Vietnam to the south. Its capital is Beijing, and its largest city is Shanghai. (Dictionary.Com, 2015)

**China:** A republic in E Asia: the third largest and the most populous country in the world; the oldest continuing civilization (beginning over 2000 years bc); republic established in 1911 after the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty by Sun Yat-sen. (Collins.com, 2015)

**Change:** to make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., of (something) different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone. 2: to transform or convert (Dictionary.com, 2015)

**Change:** to make different in some particular (Merriam Webster, 2015)

**Defense Posture:** “For the purposes of this report, the terms global military posture and global defense posture are used interchangeably, and are defined as: The deliberate apportionment and global positioning of forward-based and forward-deployed forces, and the development of supporting global attack, global mobility and logistics, forcible entry, global command, control, communications and intelligence forces, and supporting security relationships and legal agreements, in order to facilitate the rapid concentration of forces in time and space across transoceanic distances, to support and sustain US military presence and operations in distant theater, and to establish a favorable global strategic balance.” (Krepinevich and Work, 2007)

**Defense Posture:** “In other words, the US global military posture can thus be envisioned as an interconnected set of components: forward-based forces and the permanent and temporary overseas bases and facilities that house them; forward-deployed forces and the permanent and temporary overseas bases and facilities that support them; global attack forces based on US territory or in space that are capable of immediate employment over intercontinental ranges; a strategic mobility and logistics infrastructure that links together and supports all US forward-based, forward-deployed, global attack, and surge forces; those forcible entry and rapid base construction forces consistent with the overall strategic access environment; and a global command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) network. These six physical components rest on a seventh—supporting security relationships and legal arrangements, such as bi-lateral or multi-lateral agreements and treaties and status of forces agreements (SOFAs). These diplomatic and legal instruments allow the basing or positioning of US forces on foreign soil and establish rights of global transit for strategic mobility and other military forces. Moreover, the posture’s “connective tissue” comes in the form of strategic and operational concepts that link the overall posture with existing or emerging contemporary national security challenges and the military capabilities needed to address them.” (Krepinevich and Work, 2007)

**Foreign Policy:** a policy pursued by a nation in its dealings with other nations, designed to achieve national objectives. (Dictionary.com, 2015)
Foreign Policy: Foreign policy refers to actions the United States government takes on behalf of its national interests abroad to ensure the security and well-being of Americans and the strength and competitiveness of the U.S. economy. (Sabato and O’Connor, No Date Given)

Foreign Policy: “Foreign policy of a state is concerned with the behaviour of a state towards other states. It refers to the ways in which the central governments of sovereign states relate to each other and to the global system in order to achieve various goals or objectives.” (Rizwan, 2009)

Foreign Policy: “Foreign policy is the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations.[1] Foreign Policy includes not only military action but trade and humanitarian interactions as well.” (Hussain, 2011)

Foreign Policy: “Foreign policy describes the laws, orders or actions of a national government with regard to other nations and international bodies. Foreign policy includes activities such as adhering to international laws and conventions; membership and involvement of multilateral bodies like the United Nations; alliances and security agreements; trade agreements; and supplying foreign aid to developing countries or areas affected by natural disaster.” (GovLawPol.com, 2015)

Its: The possessive form of it (Dictionary.com, 2015)

Its: relating to or belonging to a certain thing, animal, etc.: made or done by a certain thing, animal, etc. (Merriam Webster, 2015)

Substantial: of ample or considerable amount, quantity, size, etc. (Dictionary.com, 2015)

Substantial: Considerable in importance, value, degree, amount, or extent (The Free Dictionary, 2015)

Toward: In the direction of (Dictionary.com, 2015)

Trade Policy: Laws related to the exchange of goods or services involved in international trade including taxes, subsidies, and import/export regulations. (Business Dictionary.Com, 2015)

Trade Policy: Trade policy defines standards, goals, rules and regulations that pertain to trade relations between countries. These policies are specific to each country and are formulated by its public officials. Their aim is to boost the nation’s international trade. A country’s trade policy includes taxes imposed on import and export, inspection regulations, and tariffs and quotas. (Economy Watch, 2015)
Trade Policy: The policies and laws (both national and international) that govern a country's trade, as well as the objectives that countries seek when dealing with one another through consultations, negotiations, or dispute-settlement procedures. Whereas trade is principally the province of private firms, trade policy is a governmental responsibility.

The range of issues that fall within the scope of trade policy expanded greatly in the 1970s through the 1990s, both through technological advances that widened the array of tradeables as well as through the political process by which demandeurs brought new issues to the table and persuaded their partners to treat them as the subject of trade negotiations and rules. Prior to the 1970s, trade policy consisted almost entirely of tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and other border measures affecting imports and exports of goods. Since that time, the array of issues that fall within the jurisdiction of trade policy has grown to include services, government procurement, investment, intellectual property rights, and — arguably — labor rights and the environment. (Washington Trade Report, 2012)

Trade Policy: “The Obama Administration is committed to a trade policy that provides new opportunities for workers and that supports economic growth by opening markets, enforcing our agreements, and leveling the playing field for our workers.” (Office of the U.S. Trade Representatives, 2015).

Summary

Resolutions: The proposed resolutions provide adequate options for topic areas while still providing focus.
**Timeliness:** Foreign policy creation and direction between the U.S. and China is an ongoing, daily event. We can expect to see changes within the topic as new policies are drafted and established, and we can expect changes to come after the 2016 election. The topic will be dynamic and timely.

**Scope:** The topic provides adequate ground to both sides of the debate. Affirmatives will be able to analyze a broad range of potential policy proposals within the subset of the resolution, while negatives will be able to craft case specific arguments both in terms of case solvency arguments and tailored disadvantages and counterplans.

**Range:** This topic allows both novice and skilled debaters to expand their knowledge and skill. With subsets, novice case areas could readily be adopted by most debate leagues around the nation, or specific novice cases created. For more experienced debaters, a wide range of literature will allow for maximum creativity in terms of argument creation.

**Quality:** The debates on this topic will not only make the debaters think about our nation’s relationship with China and may do some to dispel the ongoing misunderstandings that crop up again and again in U.S. – China relations. If the purpose of policy debate is to train a new generation of policy makers, this topic could be the springboard for change in the future. Additionally, Chinese students, debating in China, would be drawn to it as well as it would allow them to analyze U.S. – China relations, which would be mutually beneficial to both nations.

**Material:** The sheer volume of writing on the U.S. – China relationship ensures that there will always be a surfeit of material for debaters to work with. If anything, there may be too much literature on the topic, meaning that kids will have to be very selective about their choices.

**Interest:** China is a nightly news topic and foreign policy topics general seem to excite the community.

**Balance:** This paper illustrates the potential ground for arguments for both the affirmative and negative. As educators, politicians, and students discuss education, there is no shortage of differing opinions and research countering other opinions and answers.

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**Works Cited**

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