



Policy/Cross-X 2013-2014 Topic Analysis

The current NFL policy resolution, **Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement toward Cuba, Mexico or Venezuela**, invites debaters to discuss a variety of issues pertaining to economics, development theory, international relations, and American interventionism. This paper will present an introduction to some of the core issues debaters may want to consider. It will focus on the policy side of things; look for more resources for K debaters out later.

In this resolution, the aff side is asked to defend that economic engagement with Latin America should be increased. Let's begin with an analysis of the resolution from a **topicality** standpoint.

The first thing you need to be aware of is that "economic engagement" is generally understood to be a **term of art**. Terms of art are words or phrases which convey a specific meaning within a specific discipline (in this case, policy-making and international relations). You should not, therefore, be pulling your definitions from a regular dictionary or drawing them from non-legal sources. If you do, there's a good chance you will lose your T debates on contextuality-type arguments.

So, how do policymakers define economic engagement? Broadly, most sources support the idea that **economic engagement requires *interaction* between two or more countries on an economic issue**, in contrast to approaches where one country *does something to* a passive second country. Engagement also usually involves a goal, such as encouraging or discouraging some type of behavior in the target country.



Most people also agree that economic engagement is distinct from other types of engagement, such as diplomatic or military efforts.

Here's (long) **evidence** to support the above:

[Dr. Evan Resnick, Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yeshiva University, "Defining Engagement", Journal of International Affairs, Spring, 54(2), 2001]

Scholars have limited the concept of engagement in a third way by unnecessarily restricting the scope of the policy. In their evaluation of post-Cold War US engagement of China, Paul Papayoanou and Scott Kastner define engagement as the attempt to integrate a target country into the international order through promoting "increased trade and financial transactions."(n21) However, limiting engagement policy to the increasing of economic interdependence leaves out many other issue areas that were an integral part of the Clinton administration's China policy, including those in the diplomatic, military and cultural arenas. Similarly, the US engagement of North Korea, as epitomized by the 1994 Agreed Framework pact, promises eventual normalization of economic relations and the gradual normalization of diplomatic relations.(n22) Equating engagement with economic contacts alone risks neglecting the importance and potential effectiveness of contacts in noneconomic issue areas.

Finally, some scholars risk gleaning only a partial and distorted insight into engagement by restrictively evaluating its effectiveness in achieving only some of its professed objectives. Papayoanou and Kastner deny that they seek merely to examine the "security implications" of the US engagement of China, though in a footnote, they admit that "[m]uch of the debate [over US policy toward the PRC] centers around the effects of engagement versus containment on human rights in China."(n23) This approach violates a cardinal tenet of statecraft analysis: the need to acknowledge multiple objectives in virtually all attempts to exercise inter-state influence.(n24) Absent a comprehensive survey of the multiplicity of goals involved in any such attempt, it would be naive to accept any verdict rendered concerning its overall merits.

A REFINED DEFINITION OF ENGAGEMENT

In order to establish a more effective framework for dealing with unsavory regimes, I propose that we define engagement as the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state through the comprehensive establishment and enhancement of contacts with that state across multiple issue-areas (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, cultural). The following is a brief list of the specific forms that such contacts might include:

DIPLMATIC CONTACTS



Extension of diplomatic recognition; normalization of diplomatic relations

Promotion of target-state membership in international institutions and regimes

Summit meetings and other visits by the head of state and other senior government officials of sender state to target state and vice-versa

MILITARY CONTACTS

Visits of senior military officials of the sender state to the target state and vice-versa

Arms transfers

Military aid and cooperation

Military exchange and training programs

Confidence and security-building measures

Intelligence sharing

ECONOMIC CONTACTS

Trade agreements and promotion

Foreign economic and humanitarian aid in the form of loans and/or grants

CULTURAL CONTACTS

Cultural treaties

Inauguration of travel and tourism links

Sport, artistic and academic exchanges (n25)

Engagement is an iterated process in which the sender and target state develop a relationship of increasing interdependence, culminating in the endpoint of "normalized relations" characterized by a high level of interactions across multiple domains. Engagement is a quintessential exchange relationship: the target state wants the prestige and material resources that would accrue to it from increased contacts with the sender state, while the sender state seeks to modify the domestic and/or foreign policy behavior of the target state. This deductive logic could adopt a number of different forms or strategies when deployed in practice.(n26) For instance, individual contacts can be established by the sender state at either a low or a high level of conditionality.(n27) Additionally, the sender state can achieve its objectives using engagement through any one of the following causal processes: by directly modifying the behavior of the target regime; by manipulating or reinforcing the target states' domestic balance of political power between competing factions that advocate divergent policies; or by shifting preferences at the grassroots level in the hope that this will precipitate political change from below within the target state.



This definition implies that three necessary conditions must hold for engagement to constitute an effective foreign policy instrument. First, the overall magnitude of contacts between the sender and target states must initially be low. If two states are already bound by dense contacts in multiple domains (i.e., are already in a highly interdependent relationship), engagement loses its impact as an effective policy tool. Hence, one could not reasonably invoke the possibility of the US engaging Canada or Japan in order to effect a change in either country's political behavior. Second, the material or prestige needs of the target state must be significant, as engagement derives its power from the promise that it can fulfill those needs. The greater the needs of the target state, the more amenable to engagement it is likely to be. For example, North Korea's receptivity to engagement by the US dramatically increased in the wake of the demise of its chief patron, the Soviet Union, and the near-total collapse of its national economy.⁽ⁿ²⁸⁾

Third, the target state must perceive the engager and the international order it represents as a potential source of the material or prestige resources it desires. This means that autarkic, revolutionary and unlimited regimes which eschew the norms and institutions of the prevailing order, such as Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany, will not be seduced by the potential benefits of engagement.

This reformulated conceptualization avoids the pitfalls of prevailing scholarly conceptions of engagement. It considers the policy as a set of means rather than ends, does not delimit the types of states that can either engage or be engaged, explicitly encompasses contacts in multiple issue-areas, allows for the existence of multiple objectives in any given instance of engagement and, as will be shown below, permits the elucidation of multiple types of positive sanctions.

This evidence establishes that economic engagement:

1. Involves interaction between multiple states.
2. Pursues a change in the target country's behavior.
3. Is distinct from other forms of engagement (diplomatic, military, cultural). Since the resolution specifies "economic engagement," instead of simply "engagement," we ought to narrowly limit the topic to exclude other forms of engagement.

Another consideration is that, according to some interpretations, engagement requires a **quid pro quo** ("this for that," placing conditions upon the interaction). Affs who want to include non-economic elements might avoid topicality issues by conditioning some form of economic involvement upon behavioral changes dealing with other issues (such as human rights—e.g. "The U.S. will lift the Cuban embargo on the condition that Cuba [does whatever—maybe something like releasing political prisoners]").



It is easy, though, to find evidence that concludes that there are two types of engagement: those that include QPQs and those that don't. Affs who do not want to include quid pro quos should make sure they have some of that evidence handy, in case you see "T: engagement must be QPQ."

There are also interpretations that suggest that "engagement" must include **positive rather than negative incentives**. In other words, enticements are topical, but threatening punishments for failure to comply are not. Imposing sanctions, for instance, would thus not be topical. Again, though, this is always debatable.

Without a doubt, "economic engagement" is the central term of the topic. The only other word you may need to consider is "toward." Be aware that **"toward" is thought to be broader than "to" or "in."** The implication is that affs may be allowed to deploy cases that:

1. Use intermediaries (such as international organizations).
2. Lack physical contact with the target country.
3. Involve actors outside of the topic countries.

In other words, "toward" allows affirmative flexibility beyond simple bilateral engagement between the U.S. and one topic country. Get creative!

With the crucial topicality questions covered, let's move on to discussing some specific affirmative arguments. This is in no way intended to be a comprehensive guide; it is only a primer on a few core topic issues. You are strongly encouraged to do your own research, think for yourself, and consult the [case list](#) for more ideas.



To begin, let's take a look at **Latin America as a region**. Your debates on this topic are sure to include discussions of economic growth, regional security, and American leadership throughout the whole of the geographic area known as Latin America.

Research suggests that economies in Latin America have been slumping along with the rest of the world this year, but are projected to grow over the next few years. This is largely due to rising domestic consumer spending. The United Nations advises that in order to continue to drive growth, Latin America needs to cultivate foreign demand for exports. The present crossroads presents a good opportunity for affs who want to use trade as a part of their solvency mechanism.

Here's **evidence**:

[Aaron Morrison, The Miami Herald, "UN: Latin American economy decelerated this year, expected to grow for the next two," <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/12/18/3826346/un-latin-american-economy-decelerated.html#>, December 18 2013]

Economic growth in Latin America and the Caribbean declined this year, but is expected to improve over the next two years, according to a new U.N. report.

Growth slowed four-tenths of a percent to a pace of 2.6 percent in 2013. Based on promising signs of private consumption and manufacturing, the the region will see growth rates of 3.6 in 2014 and 4.1 percent in 2015, according to World Economic Situation and Prospects 2014, a report that launches in January.

Global economic growth has been in a two-year slump — a 2.1 percent growth rate for this year and 2.4 last year was down from 2.8 percent in 2011 — but should increase at a rate of 3.0 percent in 2014 and 3.3 percent in 2015, according to U.N. estimates.

Improvement in Latin America will depend on the region's ability to strengthen global demand for exports and, more important, withstand geopolitical forces and address nagging domestic issues that can hold the region back, experts say.



“Wherever there are centers of tension, there are impacts to the economies,” said Shamshad Aktar, the assistant U.N. secretary general for economic development, referring to events in the Middle East that have been driving the price of oil.

In South America, where Brazil once enjoyed a sustained growth rate on the strength of its oil exports, growth has been subdued because of weak external demand, volatility in international capital flows and tightening monetary policy, the report says.

You can read this card in conjunction with country-specific evidence to make the argument that economic engagement is key to regional economic growth, which can be impacted out into many different scenarios.

There are also plenty of sources suggesting that economic engagement in Latin America is essential to the health of the American economy. Here’s some **evidence**:

[Roger F. Noriega and José Cárdenas, former assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs and former assistant administrator for Latin America at the U.S. Agency for International Development, “An action plan for US policy in the Americas,” American Enterprise Institute, 12/5/12, <http://www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/latin-america/an-action-plan-for-us-policy-in-the-americas/>]

Expanding regional economic cooperation is crucial to US economic growth. An aggressive trade promotion and investment strategy in today’s hypercompetitive, globalized economy is not a policy option; it is an imperative. Clearly, prosperity at home depends on success abroad. The economic opportunities in the Western Hemisphere are enormous, and US policy-makers and the private sector must recognize them as critical to US economic growth.

In 2011, US exports reached a record \$2.1 trillion in total value, despite the fact that only 1 percent of US businesses export their products to foreign markets. The United States must expand on these opportunities. Exports benefit the US economy by offering companies opportunities to tap new markets, expand their production, and earn more consumer dollars. Today, 95 percent of the world’s consumers live outside the United States, and the International Monetary Fund predicts that, through 2015, some 80 percent of economic growth will take place beyond US shores.



It is indisputable that an aggressive US trade policy—meaning selling US goods and services in as many markets as possible—is essential for the US economy to hone its competitive edge in the 21st century. In this sense, America's future is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbors in its own hemisphere. A prosperous hemisphere means a more prosperous United States.

Another good place to build argumentation is **regional stability**. You can argue that the aff prevents instability for a variety of reasons (which will depend on your specific plan). Here's impact **evidence** for suggesting Latin American instability causes war:

[James Boz, Freelance writer and consultant working on Latin American politics, security, economics and technology issues, "Could instability spread to Latin America?" <http://www.bloggings...-to-latin.html>, February 1 2011]

Even given the current unrest in the news and watching the global trends, I'm not ready to say yes to this being a crisis year, a sort of collision of global, regional and local circumstances that cause many governments to face change at the same time. But the possibility is there. If it is a crisis year, what would it mean for Latin America? First, not surprising to readers, *Latin America is not the Middle East*. Nearly all the governments are democratically elected, though with their various flaws and modifying adjectives. It's a different history, culture and economy. People have different expectations of their governments. That said, some of Latin America's democracies have been less stable than the MidEast dictatorships over the past two decades. Latin Americans feel many of the same frustrations in terms of governments not delivering on their promises of economic development and social justice. Being different means Latin America experiences instability differently, not that it's immune to destabilizing events. Second, what would regional instability look like? I think it would mean significant protests in many countries and an unscheduled change of government (via protest, coup, forced resignation, or other event) in 3 or 4 countries in the hemisphere this year. It may also include the possibility for violent conflict, civil war, or "dueling governments" in which two different groups try to claim they are the legitimate governing authorities in a country. It's not a pretty picture. It's a scenario I fear and a prediction I'm very reluctant to make (so I'm not making it yet; to stress, I'm not certain this is what we will see, but it's possible). Third, think in terms of *months, not days*. With the speed of events in the Middle East combined with the immediacy of new media coverage, it feels like everything is sprinting towards a dramatic conclusion (people will be writing me next week to claim that I'm wrong because nothing has happened in Latin America yet). The protests in Tunisia took weeks to topple the government and Egypt is still going on after a week. If this is linked to global commodity prices and we think those prices are going to increase this year, then we could be looking at a very tough May or July or October that makes January 2011 look easy. Fourth, how would regional instability interact with the ongoing violent crime problems? While Latin America doesn't face problems of religious extremism like the Middle East, it does have a serious organized crime and street crime problem that makes portions of the region some of the most violent in the world. A sudden destabilization of governments would certainly impact how organized crime functions and governments' ability to fight against it. Additionally, the violent crime issue may increase the chance certain governments destabilize. Fifth, yes, local issues matter. It may be a global or regional pressures creating instability. But protesters' success and governments' resiliency once that instability begins depends largely on local factors individual to that country.



Understanding the country-by-country situation remains very important, even in the face of a larger trend. Finally, think the unthinkable. *Even countries that you think are stable could be hit suddenly by this.* It's not just countries that many analysts think are unstable in their democracies (i.e. Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador and Paraguay). We should also be watching Chile, Colombia, Peru, Cuba and others. If this is a "crisis year," then governments are going to be destabilized in ways that you thought six months ago would be near impossible.

Or, you could discuss American leadership in the region. This **evidence** suggests that influence in Latin America needs to be an American priority, or other countries will fill in, and this will damage American economic and security interests:

[Andres Cala, geopolitics and energy analyst, "Latin America finds its footing," ConsortiumNews, <http://consortiumnews.com/2013/12/16/latin-america-finds-its-footing/>, December 16 2013]

At the core, both the standoff and the outcome involving Repsol are part of a much broader rebalancing of power that started over a decade ago with Latin America's gradual economic expansion and then sped up as Spain descended into an unprecedented economic contraction. Latin America rose while Spain fell.

U.S. and Latin American relations are not only different and much more complex, but significantly more asymmetric. Washington still wields far more influence than any other foreign power. Brazil is the only country able to really – and half-heartedly so far – directly challenge the U.S. economic dominance. But other countries, to varying degrees, have shaken off some of Washington's grip.

Over the past few decades, Washington has exacerbated its difficulties with Latin America by trying to continue the old intrusive techniques, represented by the Reagan administration's heavy-handed interventions in Central America, the Clinton administration's neoliberal economic policies demanding budget austerity and business privatization, and the Bush-43 administration's bullying of Venezuela and extension of the "war on terror" into Colombia. Even the Obama administration – though less contemptuous – has neglected the region's rise.

Because of Washington's arrogance and miscalculations, U.S. diplomacy has often been left in the hands of political ideologues who pander to domestic audiences and corporate interests, whether the policy is Cuba, the drug trade or animosity to leftwing populist governments.

But the stakes for the United States are now rising. Other world powers are trying to position themselves at the expense of U.S. indifference and arrogance. While it's true that the U.S. is in no risk of having to deal with symmetric demands from the region like Spain now is, Washington's diminished influence is risky diplomatically, economically and strategically.



The Repsol saga is thus the latest and most powerful example of Latin America holding its ground and broadening its reach, for no other reason than it can. This trend will continue, as much as Asia has charted its own path toward empowerment.

The Obama administration would be well-advised to upgrade relations with its southern neighbors, as it has with rising Asian powers. Otherwise, Washington will continue to drive wedges between itself and Latin America, damaging its own interests.

If you're going to read this evidence, make sure your case isn't an example of the type of policies it identifies as the source of the problem, of course!

More **evidence** arguing cooperation is important for both economic and security reasons:

[Roger F. Noriega and José R. Cárdenas, senior US State Department official from 2001-2005 & currently a visiting fellow at AEI & managing director of Vision Americas LLC, and contributor to AEI's Venezuela-Iran Project & a director with Vision Americas. An action plan for US policy in the Americas, <http://www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/latin-america/an-action-plan-for-us-policy-in-the-americas/>, December 05, 2012]

A stable and prosperous Americas is indispensable to US economic success and security. The region is home to three of the top four foreign sources of energy to the United States, as well as the fastest-growing destinations for US exports and investment. Clearly, geography and shared values predetermine a united destiny for the United States and its neighbors in the Americas. How positive and fruitful that destiny will be depends on whether US policymakers, private businesses, and civil society move with a greater sense of purpose toward seizing promising opportunities and meeting critical challenges. ¶ Times have changed. The US fiscal crisis and preoccupation with two distant wars have distracted policymakers in Washington and undermined US leadership in the Americas. Although access to the US market, investment, technology, and other economic benefits are highly valued by most countries in the Western Hemisphere, today, the United States is no longer the only major partner to choose from. Asia (principally China) and Europe are making important inroads. So, as US policymakers retool their strategy for the Americas, they must shelve the paternalism of the past and be much more energetic in forming meaningful partnerships with willing neighbors. ¶ Of course, the United States must recover its credibility by making bold decisions to restore its own fiscal solvency, while



aggressively promoting trade, energy interdependence, technology transfer, and economic growth. Then, Washington will be better positioned to cultivate greater economic and political cooperation among its neighbors, beginning with an open and candid dialogue with the region's leaders about their vision, their challenges, and their priorities. Partnerships can thus be built on common ground. The security challenges in the Americas are very real and growing more complicated every day. Illegal narcotics trafficking, transnational organized crime, and radical populism fueled by petrodollars and allied with dangerous extraregional forces pose daunting challenges. Although it is wise to prioritize a positive socioeconomic and political agenda, assessing and addressing threats is an indispensable prerequisite to achieving US security and regional leadership.

You should also be packing evidence that defends whatever "type" of American presence you support. This might be hegemony, soft power, multilateral involvement, etc. It might be some combination. You may also want to discuss what other nations might try to establish leadership in the region, and why that would be problematic. The important thing is ensuring that you are prepared to support whatever formulation of American involvement your case creates.

Remember as you're doing your research that there are plenty of good cards which speak to the situation of Latin America as a whole. These cards can be extremely useful to you, but it's important for you to be honest with yourself about whether or not you access them. Read them carefully, and be realistic about whether the issues and nations they discuss are applicable to your case. One size does not always fit all!

Now, let's consider some potential sites of argumentation within each of the three **topic countries**. Because there are so many possibilities, we will consider a few major options for crafting cases around each nation, and discuss what sorts of impacts those cases invite. Keep checking back with Debate Central for more case-specific analysis throughout the season.

Some of the most glaringly apparent case areas on this topic deal with **Cuba**. Obviously, lifting the embargo is a major possibility. One strategic value here is that there's very little evidence suggesting the



embargo has succeeded in any way. On the other hand, you will probably have to debate a lot of politics disads, since lifting the embargo is incredibly unpopular with some lawmakers.

Affs can choose to eliminate the embargo with or without a quid pro quo. One example of a QPQ would be “lift the embargo on the condition that Cuba frees all political prisoners.” The aff would then be able to claim human rights and other advantages, in addition to the benefits from ending the embargo itself. However, if you’re going to go this route, make sure you have excellent “Cuba says yes” cards to back you up.

Here’s one such piece of **evidence**:

[David A. Perez, Yale Law School, JD, Harvard Latino Law Review, Spring, 13 Harv. Latino L. Rev. 187, America’s Cuba Policy: The Way Forward: A Policy Recommendation for the U.S. State Department, p. 216-7, 2010]

After conducting some initial discussions, both countries can then move on to the embargo. No one argues that the embargo is an effective foreign policy, because it has clearly failed to bring about real reform on the island; the only argument for maintaining the embargo is that it can be used as a bargaining chip for more dialogue – not that in its current state it can lead to a better situation. Put differently, the embargo is only valuable to the extent that its removal can be part of a quid pro quo strategy – not that its maintenance will lead to fundamental reform on the island. This reveals a bifurcated myopia that affects both sides of the debate. On the one hand those who support the embargo as a negotiating chip often gloss over the fact that its continuation will not lead to regime change. On the other hand, those who focus on the embargo’s inability to topple the regime and instead support lifting the embargo unconditionally, generally give too little weight to the embargo’s value during diplomatic negotiations. The Helms-Burton legislation lays out the rather onerous conditions that must be met on Cuba’s end before the U.S. can begin restoring diplomatic relations. The significance of Helms-Burton’s restraints cannot be overstated: while a particular president’s rhetoric or a particular resolution’s wording might chill diplomatic relations between two countries, Helms-Burton’s arduous provisions freeze relations. The onus to thaw that freeze is properly placed upon Washington, rather than Havana. It is therefore incumbent upon the United States to change its own laws before any rapprochement with Cuba can begin. Invariably the debate surrounding America’s embargo revolves around its solvency: has it worked? The question should instead be reworded to ask: will current U.S. policy work from here on out to achieve certain definable interests? The United States sold the island over \$ 700 million in goods in 2008, accounting for 40% of the island’s agricultural imports. That number seems to indicate that Cuba’s trading relationship with the U.S. is not of trivial importance to the



island's leadership. However, the strength of this relationship may steadily diminish relative to other trading partners in the next few years. For example, over the next five to seven years Cuba will have an increased energy productivity stemming from its coastal drilling operations that will bring it closer to Spain, Canada, Norway, Brazil, and India. With these relatively stable flows of capital, Cuba will increasingly become insulated from U.S. economic pressure. The moment to decisively influence Cuba's government through economic pressure may have never existed, but if it did, it has surely passed. The notion that the U.S. can intricately craft Cuba's governmental and domestic policies by applying a combination of economic and political pressure must be rejected either as categorically false, or as an anachronism of the early 1990s. During her confirmation hearings, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said "that it is not time to lift the embargo on Cuba, especially since it provides an important source of leverage for further change on the island." Secretary Clinton is correct: the embargo definitely provides a valuable bargaining chip during negotiations, and should not be lifted unconditionally. But given this evidence, the Obama Administration should be suspect of claims that the embargo gives the U.S. decisive leverage over Cuba. (5G) These Diplomatic Overtures Are Both Sequential and Reversible These first few steps would then allow the United States to begin by engaging Cuba in a multi-lateral framework. The model can mirror the six-party talks held with North Korea, which provide a structure for direct American engagement with the North Korean government. n87 The Cuban government will likely participate since the United States has so much to offer, including the reduction of sanctions, various security guarantees, the promise of normalized relations, and an eventual end to Cuba's isolation. Combined with these carrots, the United States will also have the stick of increased sanctions, and a reversion back to diplomatic isolation. Policymakers in America often emphasize that any change on America's end must be met with irreversible change on Cuba's end, based on the idea that the United States might be offering irreversible carrots for nothing. The underlying premise of that notion is simply wrong: there is no reason to believe that once the United States changes parts of its Cuba policy, it cannot reverse those changes in response to negative behavior in Havana. Concessions the United States makes on many of these issues can be reversed: targeted sanctions can be reapplied after they have been removed; travel bans can be reinstated after they have been lifted; diplomatic relations can be re-severed after they have been re-established. If the United States normalizes relations with the Cuban government, only to witness the Cuban government imprison or execute hundreds of dissidents, there is no reason why our government could not respond strongly, and even consider reverting back to hostile relations. Establishing relations between Washington and Havana is not an end in itself, nor is it a right that has been taken away from Havana. Instead, normalized relations should properly be seen as a privilege that Cuba has to earn before it is once again offered by the United States. But even if it is offered to Cuba, by no means are any overtures on Washington's end irreversible.

Another option that takes a more limited approach would be removing Cuba from the United States' state sponsors of terrorism list, or lifting a small piece of existing sanctions (such as travel restrictions).

Affs might also be interested in cultivating a trade relationship with Cuba over one specific product. One popular option is sugar ethanol, which plenty of evidence suggests is a superior alternative to corn



ethanol. Offshore oil drilling is another option. These allow you inroads to environmental and energy security impacts, which offer excellent strategic diversity.

The country with perhaps the broadest potential aff ground is **Mexico**. Because the United States has better relations with Mexico than Cuba or Venezuela in the status quo, the possibilities for creating quid pro quos to which Mexico says “yes” are greater. The narcotics trade and security at border crossing are just two options for areas in which increased cooperation might be beneficial.

Here’s “says yes” **evidence**:

[Marc R. Rosenblum, Specialist in Immigration Policy @ Congressional Research Service & Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of New Orleans, “Obstacles and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation: The US-Mexico Case,” <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/usmexico-cooperation.pdf>, April 2011]

What are the prospects for cooperation at this time? On one hand, the underlying factors that favored cooperation during the 1990s generally remain in place. Despite the intractability of migration policy, the overall US-Mexican relationship has never been closer. With 75 million trucks and passengers entering the United States from Mexico in 2009, \$250 billion in legal trade between the countries, and about 30 million Hispanics of Mexican origin living in the United States, the two countries are simply too intertwined to leave any issue of mutual concern off the bilateral agenda. Realistically, neither country can hope to accomplish its core goals at the border—controlling crime and violence, countering terrorist threats, preventing illegal entries, facilitating legal travel and cross-border trade—without close coordination and cooperation with the other.

Moreover, there’s lots of evidence being released every day suggesting the Mexican economy is growing and becoming an ever more important economic partner. The middle class and manufacturing sectors are both rising in Mexico, creating potential for enlarging both imports and exports.



Affs may also be interested in dealing with immigration issues, such as expanding America's guest worker program. With large amounts of industries (especially agriculture) insisting immigrant labor is key to their survival, this offers internal links to plenty of interesting impacts.

Mexico also presents a wide array of opportunities for affs to advocate advancing cooperation and trade on energy (especially with the government recently voting to open the previously state-run oil industry to outside investors), biofuels, and technology. Again, these allow you to access some very strategic energy security and environmental impacts.

Venezuela, in my opinion, is the country that is the least ripe with affirmative possibilities. However, that doesn't mean there aren't some interesting things you could do. The Venezuelan economy is widely regarded to be on the brink of collapse now, offering strong uniqueness and a quick timeframe for your economic (and, likely, stability) impacts.

Affs might also choose to engage by pumping money into Venezuela through international aid or NGOs. The topicality of these affs might be somewhat questionable (in terms of whether just giving money is engagement), but if you feel like you can defend it, there are plenty of interesting options. Conditioning the money on a quid pro quo is also an option, just make sure you can provide "says yes" cards.

Here is "says yes" **evidence**:

[James M. Roberts and Sergio Daga, research fellow for economic growth with the Heritage Foundation and senior policy analyst in The Heritage Foundation's Center for International Trade and Economics, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/04/venezuela-us-should-push->



president-maduro-toward-economic-freedom, "Venezuela: U.S. Should Push President Maduro Toward Economic Freedom," , 4/15/13]

Hugo Chavez's hand-picked successor, former trade union boss Nicolás Maduro, appears to have defeated Governor Henrique Capriles by a narrow margin in a contentious and hard-fought special election on April 14. Venezuela is in such shambles after 14 years of seat-of-the-pants mismanagement that Maduro—assuming his victory is confirmed—may ultimately be forced to pursue more moderate policies and seek help from the U.S. to restore stability.

The Obama Administration and Congress should exploit this opening by using U.S. leverage to push Venezuela to turn from Chavez's failed experiment in oil-cursed[1] "21st-century socialism" toward economic freedom.

Since Venezuela is very oil-rich, affs that aim to increase American imports of Venezuelan oil are also a possibility. President Maduro has stated publically that he is looking to increase oil revenues in order to bolster Venezuela's economy, so the possibilities here are significant.

No matter which topic country you choose to engage, it is critical for you to be very careful about the advantage scenarios and solvency mechanisms you select. International relations topics are often tricky for debaters, because they introduce so many more moving parts in terms of internal link scenarios. You need to be extremely judicious about the quality of your evidence and the strength of your internal links. Make sure your cards genuinely support that the plan you propose can solve (or at least make inroads against) the problems you identify. Be aware of minor differences in warrants. For example, warming relations with Venezuela is not necessarily the same thing as increasing American leadership in the region, unless you read a card that specifically says one leads to the other. Do not make the mistake of conflating separate concepts and creating messy, questionable advantage scenarios.

Keep in mind, also, that the QPQ evidence provided above can be used to create conditions CPs when you are negative. Obviously, this will only work if the aff chooses not to include a condition in the plan.



That wraps it up for this topic. Of course, there are countless other arguments you could make that are not discussed here. You are encouraged to do your own research, pursue your own ideas, and get creative! But this guide will hopefully offer you a solid footing on which to begin.

If you want even more free evidence, check out the [NDCA's Open Evidence Project](#), where you can access a huge array of camp files from around the country.

Now you should be ready to go craft an excellent case and win some debates! As always, you can email completed cases to **Rachel.Stevens@NCPA.org** for a free critique. Don't forget to also join the discussion in the comments below, and keep checking back for more Debate Central postings about this year's topic and debate in general. Good luck!