

Latin America

NFHS POTENTIAL DEBATE TOPIC FOR 2027-2028

June 2026

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I. Summary

The following is a proposal for Latin America as the NFHS potential debate topic for the 2027-2028 school year.

The resolutions in rank order for this proposal are:

1. The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.
2. The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.
3. The United States federal government should substantially increase its non-military economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.
4. The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.
5. The United State federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards Latin America.
6. The United States federal government should substantially increase its foreign policy towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.

Under these resolution options, affirmative teams can argue for economic development and trade, energy and defense security through training and infrastructure development, migration and corruption cooperation through democratic reform and or increase in aid, and sustainable energy and environmental cooperation through renewable energy cooperation and environmental protection as some notable forms of economic and diplomatic engagement. Affirmative teams can gain advantages from the economic impact of trade and development, relations between the countries and the U.S., counternarcotics and counterterrorism, along with addressing human rights violations, and enhancing the soft power capabilities of the U.S.

Negative teams can argue that the U.S. engaging democratic reform in the region can result in interference that will delegitimize future changes in governance. Debates around economic or security concerns related to migration are also possible, along with pointing out concerns in the ability for economic and diplomatic engagement to address problems such as migration. Negative teams can also argue that increasing economic and diplomatic support might enable

corrupt governments and be ineffective in addressing concerns such as human rights. Other strategies include disadvantages around the influence of China and Russia in each country, diplomatic capital trading off with Middle East concerns, and unilateral actions harming the credibility of multilateral institutions. Counterplans on the topic include international actors such as the European Union, conditional engagement counterplans, and other key generic strategies such as advantage and consult counterplans. Kritikal debate focuses on critiques of securitization, capitalism, colonialism and militarism that point out the ulterior motives of the U.S. at the expense of the most vulnerable populations in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela.

The Latin America topic is ripe for debate and contains plenty of balance between affirmative and negative ground. The main affirmative arguments under the proposed resolution allow for flexibility in addressing ethical concerns and more direct governance reform in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela. The main negative arguments also allow for flexibility between critical arguments that apply to all four countries, while also incorporating stable counterplans and disadvantages as effective responses to each main affirmative argument. This allows both affirmative and negative teams to not feel stuck into a specific argument and instead allows for flexibility in approach and argument preference as well. The Latin America topic provides ample room for argument development for affirmative and negative teams and contains stable affirmative and negative ground that will keep students of all skill levels engaged with a topic as timely as Latin America.

Summary paragraph:

Recent changes in U.S. engagement toward Latin America, including the capture of Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro and the Trump administration's expanded use of deportation of migrants and detention facilities, have signaled both a renewed interest and an aggressive approach in addressing regional concerns. Thirteen years after the last Latin America topic debated on the high school level, this proposed topic brings forth notable changes with a focused on economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela. The proposed resolutions grant affirmative teams access to plans focused on economic development and trade, energy and defense security, cooperation on corruption and migration, foreign aid and assistance, and sustainable energy and environmental protection cooperation. Negative teams can argue about the negative impact of U.S. interference and tradeoffs in diplomatic capital and China or Russia influence. Negative arguments also include international, consult, and conditional counterplans, and kritik's that challenge the intentions of U.S. engagement. This resolution provides students with the opportunity to explore the way in which the United States can help reduce corruption, provide foreign assistance to the most marginalized communities, and strengthen international cooperation towards addressing human rights and illicit activities in the Latin America.

II. Proposal Narrative

i. History and Context of the Problem Area

The past decade has brought forth a new shift in the ideological position of the United States regarding foreign policy. While historically the Monroe Doctrine was used to proclaim the role of the U.S. in the Americas in contrast to European influence, we have now seen the Monroe Doctrine evolve past this foreign policy focus and instead on U.S. influence, hegemonic control and overall U.S. involvement across Latin America (Chu et al., 2026). Resistance to U.S. involvement and influence in Latin America has been notable and tied to U.S. imperial expansion. This resulted in a rise in leftist ideology and periods of leftist government dominance in Latin America, called “Pink Tide” waves since the 1990’s into the mid 2010’s (Metcalf, 2026). Prominent leaders of the Pink Tide included Evo Morales, Hugo Chávez, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Fidel and Raúl Castro, and Daniel Ortega—all of whom utilized anti-American sentiment to justify greater power projection and opposition against exploitative industrialized great powers such as the United States (McKinley, 2023). Within the past 10 years, many Latin American countries have now shifted away from leftist ideology, leading into autocratic or at times authoritarian regimes that share ideological similarities to the current U.S. administration under Trump (Davis-Castro, 2025).

Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela historically have dealt with proxy wars, civil wars, and military coups that have shaped and led to their current form of governance. Illicit activities and corruption remain and are constant threats to human rights, leading to ineffective governance and reform. Venezuela remains in limbo following the removal of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. There remains uncertainty around how the country should move forward, and a push for a democratic and free election continues as Venezuela attempts to rebuild itself. With a new commitment from the U.S. to explore economic and diplomatic engagement, the next year will prove to be pivotal in these changes in governance within Venezuela. Latin America plays a significant role in broader engagement strategies that will always be tied to the US in terms of security, economic integration, and in addressing overall global challenges.

The reduction of foreign aid and broader levels of engagement towards the countries from the U.S., brings relations at a complicated crossroads: what does the U.S.’s retraction of support signal to these countries, and how does the reduction of support impact the region? Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, have expressed interest in revitalizing engagement with the U.S., and Venezuela is now at a point where engagement with the U.S. can provide resources for a sustainable form of governance. Exploring economic and diplomatic engagement towards Colombia, Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela allows us to answer these key questions and determine where improvements in relations and broader support can be made.

ii. Status of Current Policy Addressing the Problem Area

The first Trump administration's engagement towards Latin America was marked by significant budget reductions and the elimination of \$450 million in U.S. foreign aid to countries such as Honduras, Mexico and Colombia. This action resulted in negative effects towards social and humanitarian efforts that helped address corruption, human rights, and illicit activities in the region. The start of Trump's second administration marked another decline in foreign assistance to countries in Latin America, posing additional concerns in being able to address regional security. It is because of these declines in engagement that countries such as Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico want to revitalize engagement with the U.S. In terms of other influences in the region, Russia has recommitted to focusing on Latin America but has focused more on symbolic moves in the region that can challenge U.S. dominance (Santos, 2025). Recent changes in U.S. engagement with Latin American countries prove to reshape China's approach once more to ensure China's influence will not be threatened (Levin, 2026).

Within the year 2026, we have seen two major changes to the U.S.'s approach to addressing engagement with Latin America. A U.S. military operation that resulted in the capture of Hugo Chávez's successor, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, has altered understanding of Monroe Doctrine usage and aggressive presence in Latin America. A Latin America cartel coalition known as the "Shield of the Americas", led by Trump and joined by 13 other regional countries including Honduras was launched and aims to promote military coordination to combat transnational drug cartels. While direct U.S. assistance and less aggressive diplomatic approaches have declined recently, resurgence in U.S. gunboat diplomacy, where military use is threatened, is now a prominent tactic the U.S. has been utilizing in Latin America and has helped shape new alliances based on military action in Latin America. As a result, this leaves room for an increase in non-military, less aggressive economic and diplomatic approaches to engagement in Latin America.

iii. List of Probable Affirmative Case Areas

The Latin America topic has a stable balance between affirmative and negative ground. Affirmative arguments under the Latin America topic allow for flexibility in addressing ethical concerns, direct governance reform, and economic or security cooperation in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.

1. Economic development and Trade

Economic engagement includes trade agreements and monetary aid agreements through USAID and the Department of State overall. Current development in the restoration of Venezuela is providing brand new and upcoming evidence around economic engagement and negotiations towards lifting sanctions (Chawkin 2026). This allows for advantages based on economic growth of the country and Latin America, which can improve the global economy. Economic development and trade also allow for the U.S. to ensure security and competitiveness

in the region amid a notable China and Russia presence. Economic collapse of any Latin America country can spill over into greater instability and embolden cartels and terrorism in the region.

Mexico: strengthen or modernize the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) is a potential affirmative plan, is relevant given current review of the agreement and has a strong solvency advocate in support of this. US is the key country in establishing these changes to the agreement.

Bitar et al. 2025 (Diego Marroquín Bitar, Christopher Hernandez-Roy, and Earl Anthony Wayne “USMCA Review 2026: Pathways, Risks, and Strategic Considerations for North America’s Economic Future”, 08/18/2025. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/usmca-review-2026>)

Keeping Sights High: **Options to Deepen Cooperation Under the USMCA** The 2026 USMCA review should **not be seen as a threat to North American integration, but rather as an opportunity to modernize and strengthen the agreement. To secure the region’s economic and strategic interests, the three countries should focus on cooperative solutions that reinforce North America’s competitiveness, resilience, and cohesion. The parties may wish to consider the following actions during the review: Launch a regional supply chain security mechanism.** The three countries should **create a permanent platform dedicated to supply chain security and transparency. Such a mechanism would map regional supply chains to identify vulnerabilities, especially regarding critical goods and inputs. Policymakers should establish joint standards for traceability and origin verification, helping prevent transshipment, misclassification of goods, and forced labor, particularly from nonmarket economies like China. The parties should align security protocols, including FDI screening, to better protect sensitive industries. This outcome would be complex but achievable, providing North America with the tools to defend its economic security.** **Harmonize infrastructure and border management.** To enhance the efficiency of cross-border trade, the parties should coordinate customs practices by expanding joint inspections and preclearance programs at key border crossings. They should align infrastructure investments (e.g., ports, rail, highways, and energy connections) to ensure that physical and digital infrastructure supports seamless commerce. They also should develop common protocols for managing future crises (e.g., pandemics and natural disasters) that could disrupt trade flows. Modernize the USMCA with new side letters and additional commitments. The 2026 review should serve as a platform to update and strengthen North America’s trade framework. Rather than reopen the core text, which could prove politically difficult, especially given the absence of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) in the United States, the parties should consider adopting side letters or other binding instruments to address new priorities without triggering full legislative approval processes. **Key areas for modernization include the following: Artificial intelligence: The partners should define shared principles for AI governance, including transparency, ethics, and interoperability standards, with flexibility to update as technologies evolve. Digital trade: The parties should revise Chapter 19 of the agreement to address cross-border data flows, AI, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies, preserving an open and secure digital economy in North America. This area will require careful work by all three parties. Critical minerals: While much of this area will involve bilateral coordination, a trilateral framework could set common principles for sourcing, environmental standards, and shared strategic reserves to reduce dependence on external suppliers, build a regional supply chain, and insulate against price shocks. As mentioned, policymakers could also consider creating a new USMCA chapter on critical minerals. Energy: North America needs a more structured and strategic approach to energy cooperation. The three countries should establish a North American Energy Business Council, a permanent mechanism that brings together industry leaders, policymakers, and technical experts to share best practices, identify priority projects, and coordinate investment.** In parallel, energy should be formally integrated into the North American Competitiveness Committee (NACC), as established under the USMCA. **Doing so would align**

regulatory priorities, streamline cross-border infrastructure planning, and support the development of a sustainable, integrated regional energy market. An annual North American energy summit, held alongside NACC meetings, could also be explored. Other areas for continued dialogue include emerging technology threats and the evolution of criminal groups seeking to integrate themselves into legitimate cross-border commerce.

Honduras: modernize the Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). Three different suggestions on the approach to this for a solvency advocate and include substantial changes to the agreement or a move to bilateral agreements instead.

Millán-Mejía et al. 2025 (Enrique Millán-Mejía, Antonio Ortiz Mena, and Rocío Rivera Barradas. Enrique Millán-Mejía is a senior fellow in economic development at the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center of the Atlantic Council. He served as senior trade and investment diplomat for the government of Colombia to the United States between 2014 and 2021. Antonio Ortiz-Mena, PhD, is a nonresident senior fellow at the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center of the Atlantic Council. He served as head of the Trade & Economics office of the Embassy of Mexico to the United States between 2007 and 2015. He is the CEO and founder of AOM Advisors. Rocío Rivera Barradas, PhD, is a senior advisor with AOM Advisors. She served as trade and investment diplomat of the government of Mexico to the United States, based at the Mexican Consulate in Chicago, between 2019 and 2024. “Why modernizing CAFTA-DR matters for the United States, and options for updating the trade pact”, 11/19/2025. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/why-modernizing-cafta-dr-matters-for-the-united-states-and-options-for-updating-the-trade-pact/>)

As the US government reconsiders its trade architecture, as well as its trade network in the Western Hemisphere, updating the Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) should be viewed not as a simple economic exercise, but as a strategic investment in US economic security and competitiveness. An upgraded CAFTA-DR could reinforce regional stability at a time when economic fragility, migration pressures, and external influence are converging in the United States’ near abroad. **Aligning CAFTA-DR’s standards with the more modern United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) framework—for example, on digital trade, labor, and supply-chain governance—would create a more coherent North American–Central American production corridor serving US industries, reducing dependence on distant suppliers, and supporting a more orderly regional economy. China’s expanding presence in Central America and the Caribbean, via critical infrastructure investments, technology partnerships, and growing trade links, has altered regional dynamics and tried to dilute US influence. Modernizing CAFTA-DR is therefore not just an economic update; it is a geopolitical must-have to both secure supply chains and keep key trade partners aligned with the United States.** An updated CAFTA-DR could strengthen supply chain resilience by encouraging the strategic relocation of certain US light and more-labor-intensive manufacturing and by diversifying away from China-dependent networks. It would also enhance digital trade rules, environmental standards, and labor protections, all central issues on today’s economic security agenda. By refreshing these commitments, the United States could help its partners attract high-value investment, foster inclusive growth, and reduce migration pressures fueled by economic fragility. Moreover, modernization would reaffirm Washington’s long-term commitment to shared prosperity and democratic governance. A proactive US agenda, anchored in fair trade, sustainable investment, and transparent governance, could offer a compelling alternative to China’s transactional and opaque financial approach. In short, an updated CAFTA-DR represents a strategic tool for deepening US

partnerships, defending economic values, and reinforcing the hemisphere's autonomy at a time when geopolitical competition is intensifying.

3. Energy and defense security

This includes energy security negotiations and economic development for infrastructure, military aide, training cooperation and technical assistance. The US has a unique level of expertise and resources in this area, and Latin American countries are interested in cooperation with the US in this regard. This can also be related to trade and economic development agreements if combined with updates in agreements to include energy and defense cooperation.

Colombia security cooperation is an example of a potential affirmative. This evidence also includes a detailed list on how to restructure security cooperation between the US and Colombia and why US involvement is crucial for reducing threats in the region and addressing organized crime.

Atlantic Council 2026 (Atlantic Council, "A renewed security and cooperation agenda for Colombia's next government" 06/12/2026. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/a-renewed-security-and-cooperation-agenda-for-colombias-next-government/>)

The next phase of US-Colombia security cooperation will not be a Plan Colombia-style framework. Instead, **a recalibrated effort must address a fragmented criminal landscape financed by illicit economies and groups operating within and beyond Colombia's borders. For Colombia's next government, the priority should be to strengthen a public force capacity and direct it toward differentiated territorial threats, with clear objectives to protect civilians, disrupt armed groups and the networks that sustain them, and establish governance in priority territories. For the United States, cooperation should provide intelligence, equipment, technical assistance and capacity building to help Colombia combat transnational organized crime and respond to emerging threats. The next Colombian government, alongside a willing US partner, has the opportunity to modernize the bilateral security relationship around today's threats and shared security priorities.**

4. Migration and corruption cooperation

Migration and corruption impact the entirety of Latin America. Affirmatives can argue for increasing cooperation in reducing migration through democratic or economic reforms, or long-term foreign aid in reducing economic inequality. Previous cuts in US assistance can be revisited and restored to combat corruption and reduce migration in Honduras (Seelke 2025), while democratic and economic reforms remain a big point of concern for the US now that diplomatic ties have been restored with Venezuela (Vaz 2026, Follett 2026).

5. Sustainable energy and environmental protection

This includes renewable energy, conservation efforts, and regulations for protecting the environment. Mexico is one of the more notable countries interested in renewable energy, and the potential for both the US and Mexico to expand this area of energy has yet to be capitalized on (Pascual et al. 2025). Engaging in renewable energy and environmental cooperation is key to reducing the increasing risk of climate change and global warming further harming food supply and collapse of ecosystems into an inhabitable earth. Cooperation on sustainable energy and the environment can also help improve relations between the US and Mexico, along with the US and Colombia (Georgetown Americas Institute 2026, Vence 2024, Valenzuela 2022). Affirmative arguments for sustainability and environmentalism can provide kritikal affirmative ground as well, aiming to address “Green Colonialism” and the ineffective efforts in engagement towards protecting the environment and indigenous and impoverish communities who were exploited by green policies and agreements (Ghiotto et al. 2026).

iv. List of Probable Negative Strategies

Negative arguments under the topic also allow students to choose between critical arguments such as imperialism, security, and capitalism, while also providing opportunity to answer affirmative arguments through core counterplans and disadvantages.

1. Disadvantages

China and Russia DA: China and Russia continue to be prominent countries that engage with Latin America. The negative could argue that increases in engagement in the region will reduce and trade off with China or Russia’s influence in the region. Specifically, China continues to maintain ties with Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela in areas such as security cooperation and trade agreements (Walker 2026, Ramos 2026, Estefan and Rodriguez 2026, SAIS Review 2026), while Russia aims for more diplomatic forms of engagement. Strong country-specific links make the disadvantages a viable and core strategy under this topic.

China has a stronger influence in Latin America compared to the U.S. in the status quo. Affirmative plans will disrupt China influence in the region.

Levin 2026 (Henrietta Levin, Senior Fellow, Freeman Chair in China Studies - Center for Strategic and International Studies. “China’s strategy for Latin America and the ‘Trump Corollary’”, 02/13/2026. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-strategy-for-latin-america-and-the-trump-corollary/>)

The United States’ 2025 National Security Strategy places renewed emphasis on the Western Hemisphere. It declares a “Trump Corollary” to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and promises to “deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities, or to own or control strategically vital assets, in our Hemisphere.” The strategy otherwise describes competition with China as a predominantly economic affair, but **in the Western Hemisphere, it presents China as a geopolitical challenge and security threat whose regional influence must be urgently reduced.**

Counterintuitively, this policy may result in gains for Beijing. To the degree the United States’ pivot to Latin America draws its resources, attention, and resolve away from Asia, this is a good outcome for China—even if Beijing takes certain losses in the LAC region as a result. For instance, in recent months, 25% of the U.S. Navy’s deployed warships have been concentrated in the Caribbean. To date, this has not impacted

deployments in the Indo-Pacific. But if this deployment expands further, it will force difficult tradeoffs for U.S. posture elsewhere. **Beijing also benefits from the propaganda value of Washington’s increasingly neo-imperial tone in the Western Hemisphere, which Chinese officials have gleefully condemned, contrasting the United States’ erratic gunboat diplomacy with the stable, respectful, and mutually beneficial engagement that China can supposedly deliver. This message resonates powerfully in the Global South—including in some parts of the LAC region itself.** At the same time, Beijing surely welcomes President Donald Trump’s normalization of the idea that large countries possess an unlimited right to use military force against smaller neighbors. Nonetheless, **an aggressive U.S. effort to contest Chinese influence in Latin America could do real damage to Chinese interests.** The most significant losses, from Beijing’s perspective, will be those affecting China’s position within its own neighborhood. For example, under U.S. pressure, Argentine President Javier Milei suspended PRC plans to build a massive radio telescope in San Juan Province. **China’s network of deep space telescopes and ground stations at key latitudes in the Western Hemisphere would substantially enhance its telemetry capabilities in a Taiwan contingency. While the loss of this one site is not decisive, if Beijing were to lose access to its space facilities in several other LAC countries as well, the strategic effects could be far-reaching. The PRC would also be deeply concerned if the United States were to succeed in encouraging Central American countries like Honduras to restore diplomatic relations with Taipei. Even a successful U.S. effort to maintain the status quo and prevent the PRC from “flipping” any of Taiwan’s seven remaining LAC allies would be viewed warily in Beijing.** It is also worthwhile to revisit Trump’s earliest attempt to wrest critical infrastructure away from Chinese companies in Central America. To address U.S. concerns regarding Hong Kong-based CK Hutchinson’s ownership of ports on both sides of the Panama Canal, a BlackRock-led consortium struck a deal in March 2025 to purchase all of the company’s ports outside China. The acquisition includes five additional ports in Latin America and another 36 across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The PRC has effectively blocked the deal by insisting that COSCO, its state-owned shipping company, must have a controlling stake. While Beijing is surely concerned about its continued access to the Panama Canal, the deal’s global scope raises the stakes far higher. CK Hutchinson’s Westports Malaysia, for example, sits on the Strait of Malacca—a maritime chokepoint over which Chinese military planners have obsessed for decades, fearing that in a war over Taiwan, the United States could weaponize the strait and blockade China’s energy imports. This illustrates how the “Trump Corollary” can create strategic dilemmas for China beyond the LAC region. Ultimately, **the “Trump Corollary” will only succeed if the United States can mobilize sufficient development assistance, investment, and broad-based opportunities to compete credibly with China’s offerings in the Western Hemisphere—while simultaneously fielding an energetic engagement strategy in the regions that China prioritizes more highly.** If the United States were to cripple the PRC’s standing in Latin America but relinquish its own influence in Asia in the process, history would remember the “Trump Corollary” as a Pyrrhic victory.

Diplomatic capital DA: Extended involvement could interrupt our diplomatic capital in the Middle East due to the US war with Iran. The Negative could argue that the affirmative will reduce focus in the Middle East and create and emboldened Iran and neighboring countries (Raufoglu 2026).

Multilateralism DA: In the wake of the Trump administration’s unilateral action through the removal of Venezuela’s former president, countries are currently pessimistic of U.S. involvement in the region. Any additional unilateral moves may in fact cause backsliding and distrust in multilateral efforts being upheld (Halperin 2026).

2. Counterplans

International Actors: the EU remains notable as they continue to express interest in Latin America as a whole. Multilateral institutions are a prominent source of support for Latin

American countries such as China has the potential resources and expertise to address economic and diplomatic concerns in the region.

EU Counterplan—there exists an opportunity for more closer collaboration between the EU and Latin America

Nolte 2025 (Detlef Nolte, Associate Fellow of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and former Director, GIGA Institute of Latin American Studies. “The EU and Latin America: Reassessing the Strategic Partnership” 2025. <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/the-eu-and-latin-america-reassessing-the-strategic-partnership>)

The upcoming EU–CELAC Summit in Colombia on 9–10 November 2025 offers an opportunity to take stock of the state of interregional relations. **Both the EU and Latin America have in recent times experienced an erosion of global influence and bargaining power amid shifting geopolitical dynamics. The key question is whether – and, if so, in which areas – their strategic interests align.** Europe’s edge in terms of soft power appears to be on the wane in Latin America.

China’s image in the region now rivals that of the EU. **Latin America and the EU share a common interest in strengthening economic ties as both aim to enhance their strategic autonomy.** For Latin America, the EU represents an opportunity to diversify trade and foreign direct investment beyond China and the US. For the EU, Latin America represents an important market and a major investment destination – currently exceeding capital flows from China. The region also serves as a key supplier of critical raw materials, a role that is expected to become even more significant in the years ahead. The EU has signed memoranda of understanding on sustainable raw-material value chains with Argentina and Chile, and it has advanced and modernised its trade agreements with Latin American partners. The signing and ratification of the EU–Mercosur agreement will be a decisive test of the EU’s credibility in Latin America. The strategic visions of the EU and Latin America diverge in the areas of geopolitics and defence policy, as well as regarding respective approaches to the emerging world order. Policy Implications **The convergence of strategic interests between the EU and Latin America in the economic domain is a solid basis for intensified cooperation but must translate into tangible outcomes beyond summit diplomacy. A genuine strategic partnership will also require closer cooperation on security and defence and greater alignment in responding to the shifting dynamics of the international order.**

Conditions CP: Counterplans can include a condition to ensure democratic shifts and/or free elections, conditions on resources within the topic countries including oil and minerals, or conditions on environmental protections.

Other counterplans revolve around my plan specific options such as advantage counterplans and consult other countries such as Brazil. Common generics apply to this topic and provide the negative with sufficient opportunities to address affirmative plans and advantages.

3. Kritiks

There are plenty of critical literature revolving around the U.S.’s involvement in Latin America. Kritikal arguments overall include Security K, Capitalism K, Settler Colonialism and Militarism K. Links to each country are well established and will allow debaters to examine the ways in which U.S. presence in Latin America is an attempt to control and subjugate the most vulnerable populations by framing Latin America as a “region in need of saving”.

US engagement in Latin America is simply another extension of imperial logic—this renders the region as a tool for U.S. dominance and economic success at the expense of the communities in Latin America.

Shah 2026 (Jeena Shah, Professor of Law at the CUNY School of Law. “Trump’s Pardons and Kidnappings: The Imperial Logic of the War on Drugs”, 03/11/2026. <https://lpeproject.org/blog/trumps-pardons-and-kidnappings-the-imperial-logic-of-the-war-on-drugs/>)

It is not difficult to see why critics have called Trump’s forays in Latin America another instance of his hypocrisy and lies. Less than a month after Trump pardoned former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, who had recently been sentenced to 45 years in prison for drug trafficking, U.S. armed forces abducted sitting Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on the same charges. But as Asli Bâli observes, while Trump’s approach to rival powers like Russia and China diverges from past administrations, **his actions “punching down” against the Global South follow the established pattern**

of U.S. imperialism. **These seemingly contradictory moves reveal what the metaphorical ‘War on Drugs’ has always been about: maintaining conditions for global capitalism with the U.S. at its helm.**

The Remaking of Empire Experts have long viewed the War on Drugs as a failure. As a report by the DEA recently admitted, drug purity and potency remain high, prices remain low, and availability remains steady. Worse, increased border security has pushed traffickers to pursue drugs, like fentanyl, that are easier to manufacture and transport. But this focus on “failure” misconstrues the point of the war. As a mechanism for capitalist imperialism, it has been remarkably successful. The War on Drugs facilitates not only direct accumulation for the security industry, but also the restructuring of formerly colonized economies for land and wealth extraction — a priority for the U.S. since it became the leading power of a global economic system (capitalism) that requires imperialism during an era of rapid decolonization. To understand how this occurred, we need to begin with the economic context imposed upon the Global South in the 1970s and 80s. As I have explored in greater depth elsewhere, through its monetary and financial policy, the United States manufactured the Third World Debt Crisis, in which many formerly colonized countries, especially in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia, were unable to repay large amounts of foreign debt. As Joseph Halevi and Yanis Varoufakis have argued, this crisis was more effective in breaking the efforts of newly decolonized states to assert economic independence “than any military operation.” Desperate for IMF loans, much of the Global South agreed to implement austerity measures. As a result, they were forced to abandon efforts to replace colonialism-structured plantation economies that served a metropole with diverse, sustainable economies that could repair the de-industrialization they suffered under imperialism. They also agreed to enter into trade and investment agreements with the Global North that made them again become captive markets to the Global North and rendered their land and labor available for pillaging. This has led to the dispossession of many peasant and indigenous communities. Alienated from their means of subsistence, these communities have been forced to seek the scarce employment offered by industries owned by foreign investors. Accordingly, the profits of the remaining goods that are produced in these communities are largely captured by foreign capital. **With few other options, many of these dispossessed communities turned to illicit drug production.** The export earnings from the illicit drug industry has supported the remaking of colonial economies because these earnings have softened the blow from the high rates of dispossession,

dislocation, and unemployment left in the wake of IMF-imposed austerity measures and predatory trade and investment agreements, dampening revolutionary backlash. These earnings also enable Global South countries to finance the foreign debt they owe to these very same institutions — a significant source of wealth transfer from the Global South to the Global North. **Beyond creating the conditions for and benefitting from drug production in Central and South America, the U.S., through its War on Drugs, has also financed repressive police, military, and paramilitary forces that serve to expropriate yet more land for U.S. capital, while waging dirty wars against labor, environmental, and indigenous and peasant movements opposing this dispossession.** This was most evident in Clinton’s Plan Colombia, which empowered the Colombian military’s repression of leftist movements. As Lesley Gill describes it, Plan Colombia unleashed “[a] violent counter-agrarian reform [that] washed over the countryside, consolidating some of the most fertile lands into the hands of paramilitaries and the elites whose interests they served.” (And even when the War on Drugs’ repressive tactics have directly targeted drug crop eradication, the “balloon effect” shifts production into previously untapped areas, further dispossessing peasants to make more land available for capital accumulation.) **The War on Drugs has also served as moral cover for disciplinary mechanisms deployed against Global South powers that resist U.S.-led capitalist imperialism.** For instance, while the 1989 invasion of Panama and capture of Manuel Noriega were justified as part of the War on Drugs, the primary motivation behind the operation was to bring into power a friendly government that would ensure continued U.S. access to the Panama Canal. In serving this role, **the War on Drugs is merely the latest disguise the United States has used to maintain its claim to moral leadership while deploying warmaking, economic sanctions, and political interference to undermine any threats to the global capitalist order and its privileged position within that order.** During the Cold War, the crusade against the bogeyman of communism accomplished this task. The fall of the Soviet Union then gave way to the War on Terror in the Eastern Hemisphere and the War on Drugs in the Western Hemisphere. But despite their virtue signaling, these wars have primarily served the machine of capitalism, leaving death of democracies and dispossession of communities in their wake.

4. Topicality

This is ample room for debate and evidence on both sides about whether economic engagement must be conditional or not. Constrained controversy around resolution wording should not be seen as inherently bad, but as an opportunity for substantiated and high-quality topicality debates. This can also encourage Affirmatives to reexamine and strengthen the wording of the plan text.

III. List of Proposed Resolutions

The following are the proposed resolutions, in order of preference:

1. **The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.**

This topic proposal suggests “substantially increase” to further set a minimum on the kind of engagement and avoid small affirmatives that would harm negative ground. The country-specific proposed resolution focus on Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela. While this first iteration of the topic proposal aimed to avoid repeating countries and focus on Central America instead, the general importance of Mexico and Venezuela amid recent events does warrant revisiting their inclusion into the Latin America topic. Mexico has been a key partner to the US, and migration cooperation will also inherently involve Mexico as the only Latin American country sharing a border with the US. In a way, it is imperative to include Mexico in Latin America resolutions. Recent actions in Venezuela also provide the opportunity for interesting debates centered around US involvement in the country and the reasoning behind why the US will intervene (such as for oil in Venezuela). Both Mexico and Venezuela have a plethora of evidence related to both economic and diplomatic engagement, which was notable during the 2013-14 topic. Colombia has expressed renewed interest in improving relations with the U.S. has provided recent evidence growth to support engagement with the country. Finally, Honduras remains a key country within Central America that continues to interact with the US amid the new president’s desire to engage with the U.S. in renewing cooperation across economic and diplomatic options.

2. **The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.**

Removing “and” may be helpful in further limiting the topic, and affirmative plans under the resolution mechanism appear more likely to choose one or the other based on research for this topic proposal.

3. **The United States federal government should substantially increase its non-military economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.**

This version adds non-military to further restrict economic and diplomatic engagement. It is argued that economic and diplomatic engagement may not necessarily exclude military actions. However, “non-military economic engagement” and “non-military diplomatic engagements” are not actual terms of art.

- 4. The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.**

This version removes diplomatic engagement in favor of economic engagement only. This more closely resembles the 2013-14 Latin America topic and may not be as desirable as a result. Removing diplomatic engagement might also narrow the topic scope too much.

- 5. The United State federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement towards Latin America.**

This resolution broadens the scope of the topic to any country in Latin America, and in fact could be too broad. A past resolution of Latin America used Latin America instead of naming specific countries or regions but did not have economic and/or diplomatic engagement as the mechanism.

- 6. The United States federal government should substantially increase its foreign policy towards one or more of the following: Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela.**

This resolution is the only one that removes economic and diplomatic engagement in favor of foreign policy. Foreign policy includes diplomacy as a tool, along with waging war, forming alliances, and trade agreements. Ultimately this resolution may prove to be too broad and result in inequal ground.

Following the traditional verb phrase used in resolutions such as “substantially increase” ultimately made the most sense compared to alternative options. The proposed resolutions center around the form of non-military engagement (economic, diplomatic, or both) or through direct foreign policy change. Ultimately, it is recommended that economic and/or diplomatic engagement be the focus of the resolution overall as it includes a mechanism and countries not explored in the past Latin America topics. Economic engagement is additionally recommended next to diplomatic engagement and provides a topic scope that is not too wide or narrow. Foreign policy could potentially operate similarly but may broaden to scope too far and result in an under limited topic. Four countries were chosen for the resolutions and remained the same in each proposed resolution, as it provides a sufficient limit to the scope of Latin America as a whole, while also incorporating four key countries from different regions in Latin America that offer a diverse range of affirmative and negative cases.

IV. Definitions

Diplomatic engagement means the interaction, communication, and range of actions between nations that influence each other.

Faizullaev 2014 (Alisher Faizullaev, professor in the department of practical diplomacy and director of the Negotiation Laboratory at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Previously, he served as the ambassador of Uzbekistan to Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the United Kingdom. “Diplomatic Interactions and Negotiations”, 07/14/2014, <https://direct.mit.edu/ngtn/article/30/3/275/121711/Diplomatic-Interactions-and-Negotiations>)

Applying an interactional perspective to negotiation analysis makes sense because negotiation requires interactions between parties. This is particularly apt when taking a psychological approach to negotiation (Rubin 2002). In the diplomatic context, the term “engagement” fully expresses the idea of interaction and denotes not just communication between the states but the range of their actions and influences on each other — whether to engage with certain countries might be a question of morality, of interests, of the assertion of identities, or a combination of all these. Diplomatic engagement requires parties to listen and take into account the views and concerns of the other side — it was the diplomatic engagement of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 that saved them from military engagement.

Diplomatic engagement includes normalization of relations or upgrade in presence in the target country.

Krain 2012 (Matthew Krain, Professor of Political Science, Global & International Studies at The College of Wooster in Ohio. 07/16/2012. “The Effects of Diplomatic Engagement and Disengagement on the Severity of Ongoing Genocides or Politicides” https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2108849)

One set of foreign policy options available to states in such instances is the use of diplomatic engagement and/or disengagement (Maller 2011). Engagement is “a foreign policy strategy which depends to a significant degree on positive incentives to achieve its objectives” (Haass and O’Sullivan 2000, 114). Types of diplomatic engagement that hold out the greatest allure to potential target regimes include normalizing diplomatic relations with a state, upgrading the diplomatic presence in that state, or regularizing interaction between high and low level diplomats. These actions legitimize the actor and signal a willingness to pursue a diplomatic resolution to disputes. They also insure more communication of information between actors (Maller 2010a; 2010b). Conversely, diplomatic sanctions include “severing formal diplomatic ties with a country or significantly downgrading ties from the normal level of diplomatic activity for foreign policy purposes” (Maller 2009, 512).⁴ This is usually done to signal disapproval of the target regime’s behavior, and to also signal the possibility of subsequent punitive measures should that behavior not change. Neither diplomatic engagement nor sanctions rule out other options. Indeed, “in practice, there is often

considerable overlap of strategies” (Haass and O’Sullivan 2000, 114). Unfortunately, we have little information about the effect of either set of diplomatic actions in situations of ongoing mass killing.⁵

Diplomacy refers to the act and practice of conducting negotiations between nations, while foreign policy refers to the diplomatic policy of a nation’s interactions with another country. Marks 2015 (Edward Marks, retiree representative on the AFSA Governing Board, a member of the American Diplomacy board and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at George Mason University. “Defining Diplomacy”, Jan-Feb/2015 <https://afsa.org/defining-diplomacy>)

Using some fairly standard dictionary definitions, we find that “foreign affairs” means “matters having to do with international relations and with the interests of the home country in foreign countries.” The term “foreign policy” introduces a further distinction: it means “the diplomatic policy of a nation in its interactions with other countries.” In contrast, diplomacy is generally defined as “the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations” in order to implement those policies and pursue those interests. A Semantic Overlap This gives us a nice progression from the general subject (foreign affairs) to a specific manifestation (foreign policy), and on to implementation (diplomacy). But that leads, in turn, to another potential source of confusion. In the policy context, each government has its own diplomacy. But in the operational sense, diplomacy also refers to the conduct of business between and among governments, carried out through bureaucratic institutions and processes. Or, to put it another way, the former is loosely intended to refer to a country’s “foreign policy,” while the latter concerns the activity of a country’s foreign policy bureaucracy. Obviously, these terms and what they represent overlap. The continuing and inevitably intimate relationship between foreign policy and diplomacy—between the objective and the means—ensures they can never be completely separated, at least in the mind of the general public. But there are fundamental differences between them. For instance, most Americans would probably agree that U.S. foreign policy includes support for democratic governments; consequently, it is appropriate for our diplomats to pursue activities that support democratic governments. Yet that objective is a comparatively recent addition to our foreign policy structure. For most of our history, John Quincy Adams’ 1821 declaration that the United States “does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy” was a more accurate representation of American diplomacy. In any case, as we know, many other governments do not include democracy promotion in their foreign policy; nor do their diplomats pursue such activities or work with those who do. Diplomacy is the instrument of communication, not the message communicated. George Kennan, who thought about his profession as seriously as he did about foreign affairs and foreign policy, noted: “This is the classic function of diplomacy: to effect the communications between one’s own government and other governments or individuals abroad, and to do this with maximum accuracy, imagination, tact and good sense.” Diplomacy’s Two Forms In other words, the medium is not the message—though the widespread confusion between the two obliged the legendary academic student of international politics, Hans Morgenthau, to

comment that there was a common “confusion of functions between the foreign office and the diplomatic representative.” **But the medium does have a corporal form; in fact, it has two. The first is the activity itself, when officials—from presidents to third secretaries and the occasional “special representative”—practice diplomacy: that is, conduct official communications between governments. The second form is an established institution.** Even the Internet operating through the cloud requires some form of instrument at either end of a conversation. **For diplomacy, that physical instrument is a foreign service (the diplomatic and consular personnel of a country’s foreign office) such as the United States Foreign Service (a government service of diplomatic and consular staff established by law as part of the executive branch.)** This corps of officials is an instrument of the government, one of the tools in the foreign policy toolbox—not an independent force. Most countries try to organize that instrument in the form of a professional cadre, recruited, trained and educated for their task as representatives and interpreters of their country’s foreign policy.

Economic and diplomatic “Engagement” focus on normalized relations with a target state.

Resnick 2001 (Dr. Evan Resnick, Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yeshiva University. Spring 2001. “Defining Engagement”, Journal of International Affairs, 54(2), pp. 551-66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24357749>)

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: **DIPLOMATIC 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.**

Latin America encompasses countries and territories in the Caribbean Islands, Central/North/South America formally colonized by Spanish and Portugues empires.
Ebsco <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/geography-and-cartography/latin-america>

Latin America is a diverse geographical region that encompasses countries and territories in the Caribbean Islands, Central America, North America, and South America. Predominantly Spanish and Portuguese-speaking, the region has a rich historical background, with early explorations by figures like Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci in the 15th and 16th centuries. **The colonial period saw the establishment of Spanish and Portuguese empires, leading to significant cultural changes and the displacement of indigenous populations.** As countries in Latin America fought for independence in the 19th century, **the term "Latin America" emerged to collectively describe these nations.**

Foreign policy is the general objective that guides activities and relations of one state in its interactions with other states.

Brittanica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy>

foreign policy, general objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states. The development of foreign policy is influenced by domestic considerations, the policies or behaviour of other states, or plans to advance specific geopolitical designs. Leopold von Ranke emphasized the primacy of geography and external threats in shaping foreign policy, but later writers emphasized domestic factors. **Diplomacy is the tool of foreign policy, and war, alliances, and international trade may all be manifestations of it.**

V. Application of the NFHS Criteria for Debate Topics

i. Timeliness and Durability

Latin America is a relevant topic and is experiencing a revival in focus from the U.S. since the last Latin America topic in 2013. With the shift in military action in Latin America to address drug cartels in the region, the Latin America topic will focus on the opportunity to improve engagement in the region through economic and diplomatic means, and potentially sans direct militaristic methods. The current crisis with migrant detention centers and subsequent deportations to countries such Honduras, along with drug trafficking concerns in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela (Leon, 2024) will continue to persist well beyond the duration of the debate topic year 2027-28, showcasing the topic's stability for the school year.

This topic is especially important under the Trump administration, even though Trump's rather volatile approach to relations with other countries is a key concern for the durability of the topic. All countries under this topic have and continue to maintain relations with the U.S., and that will persist even past his presidency proving the durability of the topic. The removal of the Venezuelan government also points towards the need for further economic and diplomatic engagement amid concerns of instability in the region. It is important to have these discussions during the current administration, where engagement towards Latin America is controversial and multifaceted.

Addressing concerns in Latin America are also a focus for social justice movements in the U.S. and the broader region. Human rights violations related to the U.S. action against migrants and immigrants from Latin America, along with violations within Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela continue to be a primary concern but have been inadequately addressed absent significant reforms and cooperation between the U.S and these countries (Roby, 2026; United Nations, 2026). With renewed interest in the region from the U.S., will continue to remain relevant and a prominent topic throughout the school year.

ii. Accessibility and Material

The Latin America topic is extremely accessible for students across different journals and major news sites. Notable ones include The Brookings Institution, The Dialogue, Latin News, Latinoamérica21, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, The Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center, the Atlantic Council, and the Washington Office on Latin America. All of these major sources provide access to articles and research without paywall, making the materials for researching the Latin America topic easy to find and utilize.

iii. Student Interest and Engagement

Students have and will continue to be open to topics center on Latin America. In the past iteration of the Latin America topic, students such as myself enjoyed learning about U.S. engagement towards Latin America. With the many policy changes under the Trump administration in addition to the change in diplomatic approaches towards Latin America, students now have the opportunity to examine the Latin America topic through a unique lens

that was not previously possible. Recent events in Latin America are important to discuss, allowing a chance to critically examine Trump's recent military approach in the region with an appropriate amount of literature to support education on the topic area. Issues prominent in Latin America, such as the migrant crisis and mass deportation, shape the view of the Latin America topic to students as well and can mean the Latin America topic can help develop their understanding of the issues beyond a surface level examination.

The Latin America topic provides students with the opportunity to learn about different countries in Latin America. Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela are examples of countries from different regions of Latin America, with distinct cultural backgrounds. This is partially cultural for many students—learning about their heritage, the context and reality of the region their families come from, and how the U.S. interacts with Latin America diplomatically provide students with a greater understanding of their culture. Additionally, it would be great to see a bridge between other multilingual debate programs such as Debate en Español. Having a Latin America topic would provide students with the opportunity to debate across different languages, further improving overall student interest and engagement.

iv. Educational Quality

Latin America is a prominent region of the world that the U.S. continues to engage with. With reputable journals, and research on the topic area as well as easily accessible news articles, students can learn the deeper political, cultural, and historical underpinnings of U.S. engagement with Latin America. Historically, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela share similar yet distinct struggles with drug trafficking, human rights violations, poverty, and corruption. Navigating these differences and similarities within four countries that represent different regions of Latin America is crucial for focused discussions about Latin America. The Latin America topic allows students to perform a thorough deep dive into the logic of U.S. engagement towards Latin America through the four proposed countries, and how the conflicts and instability of the region will continue to impact marginalized communities across the region.

v. Balance

There is an even balance in affirmative and negative ground on the topic, which is exemplified under the "List of Probable Affirmative Case Areas" and "List of Probable Negative Strategies" in the Proposal Narrative section. Key themes in affirmative and negative ground are addressed and showcase the way in which the topic has a stable and manageable balance between both sides. Evidence of economic and diplomatic engagement with Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela point towards the need for US expertise and resources, providing U.S. key warrants to answer negative arguments on other actors doing the plan.

vi. Suggested Novice Material

The potential arguments for Novices on the Latin America topic remain easily accessible and provide enough of a challenge in learning economic and diplomatic engagement while also

not being too complicated to understand. Novice material ideally should include stable affirmative plans that have established advantages

Suggested affirmative plans: Mexico renewable energy (climate change advantage, relations advantage), Honduras trade agreement (economy or energy advantage, migration advantage), Venezuela economic reform (economy advantage, democracy advantage), Colombia security cooperation (counternarcotics advantage, terrorism advantage).

Suggested negative arguments: China DA, Diplomatic Capital DA, EU CP, T-conditions, Imperialism K

The following arguments are accessible to novices and help develop the key research and argumentation skills needed for more advanced debates outside of the limited novice packet. They establish common trends in arguments including advantages around economic growth, country-specific relations, democracy promotion, and cooperation on addressing drug cartels. Core generics are included and recommended for novice debates. These negative arguments all provide skills in addressing key tradeoffs to international engagement and relationships with other countries, along with critically examining how we view U.S. economic and diplomatic engagement.

VI. Concluding Remarks

This topic proposal aimed to introduce Latin America as a viable topic option and establish potential affirmative and negative ground. This topic proposal is not an exhaustive list of potential arguments to be read on the topic and is meant to provide a brief look into the topic while focusing on prominent evidence proving the strength of the topic itself. Overall, the balance appears to be promising as a potential Topic for the following school year. Affirmative and negative teams will not feel like there are too few or too many arguments to choose from and will have flexibility in what kind of arguments they can argue and defend. The Latin America topic provides ample room for argument development for affirmative and negative teams and contains stable affirmative and negative ground that will keep students of all skill levels engaged with a topic as timely as Latin America.

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List of Prominent Resources (Interest Groups, Lobby Groups, Government Publications, etc.)

Prominent resources include but are not limited to:

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