

Theoretical Committee

(U.N.iversity)

Topic A: Constructivism in domestic policies

Topic B: International structures of neoliberalism

Letter From the Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Theoretical Committee (nicknamed, affectionately, with the pun “U.N.iversity”)! We’re very excited to welcome you to this brand-new (and entirely original) committee.

We both have extensive experience in MUN, garnering several best delegate awards and attending conferences regionally, nationally, and internationally. But we have grown somewhat tired of the conventional committee structure. We felt like every committee we attended ended in some impossible resolution, and we grew frustrated with some of the baseless idealism exhibited in many more traditional committees.

So, looking for something more challenging and something more out-of-the-box, we stumbled upon a debate that we have been having for as long as we’ve known one another: *capitalism vs. communism*. If you are, at all, an econ/politics junkie like we are (or if you have been on the Internet sometime during the past year), you will be no stranger to this debate. Ale plays for the red team, Didier for the blue; Ale is all about welfare, Didier is all about finance. And out of the desire to crystallize this endless debate into a geopolitical topic sprang U.N.iversity.

We hope you will take U.N.iversity as a chance to learn more about the different ideological currents that have shaped our world. The 20th century has been a perpetual back-and-forth of ideas, system trial-runs, and ideological failures. We hope you have fun researching and you’re ready to embody the changing ideals of the nation you’re here to represent.

We’re both well-versed in theory, and the best advice we can give you is to stick to your position. So what if you’re a libertarian representing China? So what if you’re a staunch fiscal conservative representing Vietnam? So what if you’re left-leaning representing the U.S.? We hope you’ll lean into your role, put passion into your country, and step outside the confines of your mind and everything you believe to be correct.

Regards,

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Committee Policies:

Technology

Because ASFMUN will be run online this year, delegates will be required to use their laptops and computers to participate in committees. The only websites delegates are allowed to use during committee sessions are Zoom, Google Docs, which delegates will be writing their working papers and resolutions, and any other sources that the Chair permits. Unless there is an emergency, delegates should not be using cellphones or other electronic devices that will give them an unfair advantage. If there is a concern that a delegate is breaking these rules, please contact any member of the Secretariat.

Zoom Guidelines

All committees will use Zoom, and each committee will use the same Meeting ID and Passcode for every committee session. Delegates should never distribute the Meeting ID and Passcode to anybody else. In the meeting, delegates should change their display name to their position. For instance, a delegate representing Mexico should rename their display name to “Mexico”.

Moreover, delegates are expected to have their camera on at all times except when they are standing up, leaving a room, or having connection issues. While in moderated caucuses, delegates must keep their microphone muted until called on to speak.

Delegates should prepare their own placard in advance for roll call, points, motions, and voting.

[This Google Drive folder](#) will have instructions on how to make your own placard.

Position Papers:

Position Papers are due on 11:59 pm of 2/22. Please send it in PDF format to

diazpizarroa@asf.edu.mx and serranodid1@asf.edu.mx. More details can be found on the

Conference Information section of [our website](#).

Pre-writing and Plagiarism

Pre-writing of clauses, language, working papers, and draft papers is strictly forbidden.

Delegates are welcome to use Google Drive to collaborate with other delegates when writing documents. However, they must not work on it outside of the conference.

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and if any attempts are found, delegates will no longer be eligible for any awards.

Committee Overview

U.N.iversity is unlike any other committee you have ever been a part of. The purpose of this committee is to explore widespread economic & political theories and their applications in modern systems of power, both at a national and global level. Delegates of this committee will be expected to have a solid grasp of the main economic theories being discussed and their influences in their respective countries, in order to discuss the merits and shortcomings of the ideological currents that dominate our modern world.

We have chosen countries that have a history with a particular ideological current or that are famed for it, or countries whose ideology has radically shifted over the course of its history. It is up to you to research the exact changes in national policy that have come with different ideologies.

Though the parliamentary procedure will follow the standard MUN model, our resolutions will differ slightly. Resolutions will be structured as a long-term economic/political plan for the entire world to follow. This does not mean that everyone has to fall in line with the same idea or policy, but it means that the plan should be a response to the topic or address it somehow and encompass all of the countries in committee. We are happy to answer questions about what these plans should look like, but you will receive a template. Your plans must basically contain:

- Address of the topic at hand and how the plan is built around it
- Aims of your plan; what you hope to achieve with it
- Global economic goals and policies
- Regional economic goals and policies (for each country)
- Regional political goals and policies (for each country)
- How long the plan will take to be implemented

The difference here is that you will not be allowed to form blocs for your resolution. All countries must work together and arrive at the same plan.

Topic A: Constructivism in Domestic Policies

Topic A Background¹

In international relations, constructivism is the idea “that significant aspects of international relations are historically and socially constructed, rather than inevitable consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics.” This means that, according to the constructivist view, global affairs are not only the result of power politics or economic levying, but are also the product of ideas and relationships between countries.

The quintessential example to illustrate this is that the U.S. would be worried if North Korea had 500 missiles, but would not be worried if Great Britain were the one that had 500 missiles. This is because the United States has *constructed* a relationship of friendly interaction and ideological congruence with Great Britain, so it can be sure those missiles are not going to harm it, whereas its relationship with North Korea is entirely the opposite.

Constructivism identifies two main factors in global policy: *agency* and *structure*. *Structure* refers to the underlying or existent state of affairs between countries (e.g., the poor history of relations between the US and NK), whereas *agency* refers to the power the acting countries have to alter the structure or interact with one another (e.g., using agency, the US could randomly decide to align itself with NK).

However, another important part of constructivist theory are *identities*. A country’s *agency* should always align with its *identity*: as such, a large country will use its agency for affairs of global domination and influence, whereas a small country will use its agency for its survival. But a country can also have varying *identities* in different areas: Mexico, for example, has the economic identity of being North American, thus aligning with Canada and the US in economic affairs; however, unlike those two countries, it has the cultural identity of being Latin American, which causes it to be aligned more closely with its neighbors to the south when it comes to cultural policies or affairs.

¹ <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-international-relations-theory/>

In short, constructivism seeks to understand the underlying structures and identities of countries and of their interactions, always holding the agency of a country as the actor that might perpetrate a change in the existing state of affairs.

Resolution Focus

We would like each country to examine how constructivism influences its domestic policies or affairs. For example, the United States, by allowing Texas to sanction or fire anyone who supported the BDS movement, tapped into its *constructed* relationship with Israel. Mexico, as well, allowed its economic identity to superimpose over its cultural one when president Vicente Fox asked Cuban leader Fidel Castro to leave the country in 2002 to not butt heads with US president George Bush. Cuba, as well, is no stranger to domestic constructivism, as in the 1980s it implemented a liberalization plan much like the Soviet Union's because they were allies (that Castro withdrew it, in 1986-1987, is a different story, but also one we want you to think about).

As for the resolution, your plan should focus on examining the relationships between present countries and whether those existing structures should be kept, modified, or altogether dispensed with. You should also address constructivism in your country's domestic policy and find consensus as to how to proceed with it.

Questions to Consider:

- What existing relationships does my country have with other member states in committee?
 - What is the nature of those relationships (economic, ideological, cultural, etc.)?
 - Does my country have “enemies”? What is the nature of that enmity?
- What policies has my country undertaken domestically that align with/directly oppose the aims of a different country?
 - Are those policies beneficial or detrimental to my population?

Key Players

Though all countries chosen have strong ideologies, some have been more influential or received more influence than others.

- **United States:** one of the great players of the Cold War and chief homogenizing force for global culture and media consumption. It's hard to find a country that does not, in some way, relate to the U.S.!
- **Russian Federation:** as the U.S.S.R, another key player of the Cold War, whose left-leaning ideology was the trailblazer for many leftist revolutions worldwide.
- **Cuba:** its foreign policy has been, historically, swayed by opposition to the U.S. and (to a lesser extent) alignment with the U.S.S.R. The Cuban Revolution was also unique in influencing similar movements in Latin America, including the Pink Tide of the 2000s.
- **Mexico:** many of Mexico's policies are built around what the U.S. might best like or what aligns the best with it. This is a key example of geographical constructivism, as Mexico has no choice but to be on friendly terms with its neighbor to the North.
- **Chile:** Chile's neoliberal system is a direct result of Milton Friedman's "Chicago Boys" returning to test U.S. economic ideology in Latin America.
- **Nicaragua:** Nicaragua's domestic policies from the Sandinistas onward have been ever-influenced by U.S.S.R alignment and the godfathering of Cuba and Fidel Castro.

Key Terms:

- **Agency:** the power of a state in shaping its own affairs or making decisions.
- **Structure:** the existing *status quo* of relationships between countries.
- **Identity:** the individual configuration of each country on the world stage, relating to its economic, political, and geographic position.

Topic B: International Structures of Neoliberalism

Topic B Background²

Neoliberalism is “the government policy that “advocates the greatest degree of unrestricted free trade and open markets [...] while insisting on the most minimal government spending [...] and interference in the economy,” and which became a dominant current in 1980s-90s Latin America. Neoliberalism is firmly tied to globalization, which refers to “the worldwide spread of industrial production” created by free trade.

Neoliberalism is a relatively new school of thought, and its most famous proponent is economist Milton Friedman, of the University of Chicago, under whose tutelage the “Chicago Boys” spread the ideology to Latin American countries. But recently, the ideology has fallen out of vogue, and worldwide leaders (namely Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico) have begun to criticize it by name. Generally, the criticisms center around how neoliberalism’s outsourcing of production has led to human rights abuses in manufacturing plants worldwide, and about how the globalization represented by its unrestrained free trade is depriving local workers of jobs and income.

Resolution Focus:

Delegates should examine the role of neoliberalism in their respective countries in recent years. Upon writing the resolution, delegates should make a pronouncement about neoliberalism, and the resolution should focus on perfecting it, reforming it, or dismantling it.

Delegates should also consider the impact of globalization on their countries and whether we, as a world, should advocate for more or less of it.

Questions to Consider:

- How has neoliberalism influenced my country?
- Does my country benefit from globalization, or is it harmed by it?

² Goldstein, Natalie. “Introduction.” *Globalization and Free Trade*, Infobase Publishing, 2010, pp. 3–70. *Google Books*.

- How has my country's economy changed as a result of increased globalization and free trade?

Key Players:

- **United States:** the US is the world's largest proponent of neoliberalism, and the country that has most benefited from NAFTA and the T-MEC.
- **Mexico:** Mexico radically shifted its economic policy following NAFTA. Neoliberalism has decreased the consumption of domestic crops but has increased factory labor. Its current president is staunchly against it.
- **Chile:** the first country in which the "Chicago Boys" tested out their policies. Recent protests in Chile have demonstrated the stark impact of neoliberalism and the public opposition to it.
- **Venezuela:** this leftist country has always been against neoliberalism, since Hugo Chávez's time. Its current economic crisis may hold some connection to it.
- **Norway/Finland:** these Nordic countries have benefited from the free trade of neoliberalism, and have perfected it in their area.

Key Terms:

- **Neoliberalism:** the government policy that advocates the greatest degree of unrestricted free trade and open markets while insisting on the most minimal government spending and interference in the economy.
- **Globalization:** the worldwide spread of industrial production created by free trade.
- **Milton Friedman:** UChicago economist and the foremost proponent of neoliberalism.
- **"Chicago Boys":** cohort of U.S.-educated, Friedman students who returned to their home countries to enact policies of neoliberalism.
- **Technocrats:** economists who go into politics and run them according to economics.

Participating countries

Brazil

Chile

China

Cuba

Finland

Germany

Mexico

Nicaragua

Norway

Russia

Singapore

South Korea

United Kingdom

United States of America

Venezuela

Vietnam