

2025 NPTE Topic Committee

Chair, Brent Nicholson, McKendree University

Alex Li, Parliamentary Debate at Berkeley

June Dense, Parliamentary Debate at Berkeley

Kyle Pryor-Landman, San Diego State University [KPL]

Adeja Powell, Mercer University

Final Wordings

1. The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in lithium mining in the United States.
2. The United States federal government should significantly increase its exploration of outer space.
3. The United States federal government should significantly increase its official diplomatic engagement with the government of the Syrian Arab Republic.
4. The East African Community Partner States should establish the East African Federation.
5. The Plurinational State of Bolivia should significantly decrease its investment in direct lithium extraction.

Notes

1. Each member of the committee will select a color for their comments and note their initials along with each comment they make.
2. Use the document outline to the left to navigate to specific topic areas.
3. Final wordings will be posted in the Final Wordings section on 2/14.

Lithium

Topic Paper

KPL - "The United States Federal Government should significantly increase its investment in lithium mining and processing." My only concern is "mining AND processing" I think "and/or" might expand aff ground and force the neg to be a little more creative than T.

June - "The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in lithium mining and processing." Removed the capitalization of "federal" and "government." My instinct is that the "and" is necessary in this case because "and/or" would allow affs to write extremely small 1ACs about developing existing/already mined lithium, which a) is not a substantive part of the topic literature outlined in the topic paper and b) makes neg link prep very difficult. I think rather than incentivizing neg creativity, small affs force the neg to rely on generics that link to all possible affs.

BN - I like the and for reasons June lists above. Also would consider adding "in the United States." to the end of the resolution to avoid teams double-dipping on their Bolivia offense and to otherwise constrain aff options a bit more.

RE: mining and processing, I noticed a similar discussion happening on the REEs topic from 2022 -

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12cfmC0TZhAzPnAh57IV67YT-hGPKVZutaKNxgNW2dno/edit?tab=t.0>

June - I agree with the addition of "in the United States."

AP - I agree that "and/or" would be worse for neg prep and make the aff more difficult to predict. Mining and processing already gives the aff a lot of ground but "and/or" adds flex and makes it much harder to be neg. Also agree with adding "in the United States."

KPL- I have seen the light and I realize I'm contradicting myself from last year (lol). Scrap the and/or idea. I agree with adding "in the United States."

AL - I'm a little concerned by "processing" as an action. None of the proposed offense comes from processing other than batteries (which is not mandated under the resolution) but I do think inclusion of processing could introduce some wacky spec debates. "The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in its lithium mining." There is always the perennial substantial vs significant discussion to be had as well.

BN - I don't mind separating processing from the resolution and just forcing teams to make that the solvency level of the debate. I'm pretty much indifferent on this phrasing issue.

KPL - Agreed with Brent and Alex. I think processing is too vague. I prefer significantly but its not a dealbreaker for me. See Brent's discussion on the [2024 Education Topic](#) for my rationale.

AP - I don't have any thoughts on the inclusion of processing. Seems fine without it.

BN - Alex's phrasing from above:

"The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in its lithium mining."

OR my proposed phrasing:

"The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in lithium mining in the United States."

'Its lithium mining' feels like it allows offshoring of lithium facilities as long as the US owns them or at least benefits from them materially. 'Lithium mining in the United States' allows for support of private companies but creates a clearer geographic limit. How do we feel about that phrasing choice? I think I lean 'in the US' but I'm curious to hear the case for 'its lithium mining'

KPL - I also lean in the US for the sake of the DA ground.

June - I am fine with the removal of "processing," and I agree with Brent's final wording that includes "in the United States."

AP - I also agree with Brent's final wording "The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in lithium mining in the United States"

AL - I agree with the rationale, wording looks good to me.

BN - moved this to final wordings section. Good work!

Space

Topic Paper

KPL - I personally like this flavor: "The USFG should take significant action to increase space resource extraction initiatives." However, I propose "The United States Federal Government should significantly increase its investment in resource extraction initiatives in outer space." I think this keeps the spirit of the topic while maintaining the author's intent of discussing space and keeping spec under control.

June - "The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in resource extraction initiatives in outer space." I largely agree with KPL. Removed capitalization from "federal" and "government." I think both other potential topics have issues. The topic about colonizing space to me seems like it would incentivize a wide amount of possible affs and T debates, as the aff can defend any policy that results in the colonization of space in any sense: military, financial, social colonization, etc. The combination of T: colonize and the intrinsic FX-T nature of the topic is a powerful combo. The topic about space exploration in my opinion seems to have a difficult ground distribution as well as the aff is not required to defend any type of action other than just the exploration of space, making DA ground tenuous and limited. I think the resource extraction topic is the best. My only concern is that we will have three topics that come down to resource extraction in some way – the two lithium topics and this space one. Do folks feel like that is too much, and we should select one of the other prongs instead?

AP - I agree with June on the colonization topic, seems like there's too much offense against the aff and not a whole lot of aff flex to get out of that offense. However, I am partial to the exploration topic. "The USFG should significantly increase its investment in space exploration" or "The USFG should significantly increase its investment in deep space exploration" These are backfile checks, but I am a big fan of those. Added "its" and removed "program" from the topic paper proposal. I think both allow an equal distribution of ground and avoids having three resource extraction topics. "Deep space" adds specificity without over limiting the aff and is more in line with the topic lit. Negs have access to actor CPs and T plus a whole bunch of DAs and case turns. I'm not a fan of extraction, seems like the neg offense is generic and the aff can get really specific.

BN - This wording looks good to me broadly, but one issue noted below: "The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in resource extraction initiatives in outer space."

I agree with the noted issues with other proposed topics in this paper. I also think this topic captures that offense downwind of the plan in a solvency debate. You can easily make 'extraction key to future colonization' arguments if you desperately want to get off the rock. My only concern with the topic is the phrasing "increase its investment in" could mean the aff reads arguments that resource extraction never happens and that no-links the OST/Space Race

DA pretty effectively. Do we want to consider a different phrasing, like perhaps “USFG should significantly increase its resource extraction initiatives in outer space.” More direct, less wiggle room for the aff. I think that gets to the core of the issue while possible avoiding a complicating factor.

KPL—I need to do more reading, but it doesn’t seem like there are resource extraction initiatives in the squad except for hypotheticals. Because of that, I am also concerned that every debate will be T-resource or T-increase. I also like Adeja’s idea, but I think “outer space” is key to generating solvency, whereas “deep space” would theoretically prohibit extraction from the moon or near-earth asteroids. I suppose the Artemis program would create an inherency issue, but again, I am not fully convinced one way or another about the specific action.

AL - the word “initiatives” makes Brent’s resolution a little unclear. What counts as an initiative? I agree with Adeja that exploration is the more interesting direction for the topic to go. I do not think deep space and resources can be included in the same topic. Either “The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in resource extraction in outer space.” or “The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in exploration of deep space.”

BN - I agree to cut initiatives. Making the topic more direct, even if it still takes time, works for me. Also prefer outer space to deep space for Kyle’s reasons.

KPL - I still don’t really like deep space for the previous solvency reasons and the aff can still be squirrely and explore Proxima Centuri or the moon if you desire. I don’t think the difference necessarily creates a lack of clear DA links but allows for a more “realistic” plan with a variety of actions. However - I do still want to echo June’s concerns about FX-T and Topicality but on explore rather than colonize. Given the current lack of space exploration, it seems like any aff would effectually meet but not result in the plan mandate. I am just thinking that like launching one probe would meet the burden of the aff because there are 0 now and makes generating any DA nearly impossible. I am still going to say that the resource extraction is probably the most fair topic as it stands now but I am not super stoked to have 3 mining topics unless someone can resolve the FX-T issue.

KPL - I have thought about it a bit more and I’d rather deal with FX-T on the exploration topic than have another resources topic. I think all of these issues are probably inevitable with any aff on this topic and a good aff would alleviate these concerns. Even if resource extraction is the most fair, I think for the sake of education, exploration might be the better option and create more interesting debates rather than this being LD levels of reusing the same files. “The United States federal government should significantly increase its investment in the exploration of outer space.”

AP - Do we want to include “investment” in the exploration topic? It seems like investment would be limiting whereas directly increasing exploration means the aff could be investment, but it could also be other things. I also think “investment” is more prone to inherency issues. However,

I don't have a strong opinion against it, I just think "investment" means that "exploration" becomes the effectually topical portion of most affs which makes K links more difficult to generate and even some case turns that are specifically about exploration because it's easier for the aff to shift out of it.

BN - I think either exploration or resource extraction is fine.

A. The United States federal government should significantly increase its exploration of outer space.

B. The United States federal government should significantly increase its resource extraction in outer space.

In either case, I want to remove investment, which I think adds a layer of confusion that we can avoid. I think investment opens a can of public-private partnership affs and other actions we probably don't want and muddles the waters on aff solvency. Cutting straight to the object means the aff is pretty clearly just the USFG funding that object and then the aff saying that's good.

KPL - I vote A.

June - I vote A as well. I am pro removing "investment." I think opening the door to public-private partnership affs grants far too much aff flex, considering the degree of flex the aff has on this topic already like KPL mentioned.

What do people think about "The United States federal government should significantly increase its efforts to explore outer space"? I feel like this cleanly resolves the FX-T concerns. For example, I think an intuitive topical plan text delineated by the topic paper is something along the lines of "The United States federal government should significantly increase its funding of NASA and direct NASA to work towards Mars exploration" (I'm not amazing at writing plan texts, don't read T against me please). Under the current version of the topic this is only questionably topical - the aff burden seems to me to be to explore outer space, and the neg could argue that this plan doesn't meet that burden insofar as whether the aff actually explores outer space is contingent on whether NASA is able to actually succeed in their efforts to work towards Mars exploration. It's FX-T. Changing the resolution to "increase its efforts to explore outer space" means that the example plan is more cleanly within the bounds of the aff burden delineated by the resolution.

AP - I vote A as well. I am concerned about "efforts" and think that means the aff has to be effectually topical. No shade to June's plan text writing, but my issue with the proposed plan text is that the aff plan text is now multiple planks (the aff gets to generate offense from funding NASA and also from directing NASA to work towards exploring Mars) - but I agree that it's a topical version of the proposed res (so I think the res is flawed). Multi-plank affs make it very difficult to be negative and explode predictable limits. I think the res should mandate a direct action to avoid being FX-T, "increasing efforts" adds a link chain to aff solvency which is when we start getting into FX-T issues. "Efforts" is also plural meaning t-efforts means the aff has to be multiple actions would go extremely hard.

AL - I vote A. I think “efforts” also results in the same problems I have with “initiatives” from above. The word “exploration” demands a direct fiated action that constitutes exploration. Obviously, the boundaries of that aren’t fantastic, but this debate is both more interesting and topical than efforts T.

June - That’s fair and makes sense to me! In that case I’m happy with A.

BN - Moving this to final wordings as well. This was a tricky one, but I’m pleased with end results.

Syria

Topic Paper

KPL - I am partial to this idea "The United States federal government should substantially increase diplomacy with Syria." I am worried about "Syria" as the object of the resolution because Syria refers to a physical place. I propose "The United States federal government should significantly increase its diplomatic efforts with the Syrian Arab Republic." I change substantially to significantly because substantially is too vague, and I change diplomacy to diplomatic efforts to narrow the aff ground slightly.

June - I agree with all of this. "The United States federal government should significantly increase its diplomatic efforts with the Syrian Arab Republic."

BN - I need more reading on this, but agree that we need to identify the government body, not the place. Is the governing body still 'Syrian Arab Republic' or is there a new name? I know Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham is reorganizing a lot of the political structure of the country. From quick reading, it looks like "Syrian transitional government" may be the best phrase right now, but this is a murky situation. I'm thinking back to the Taliban topic from (I believe 2022) and will reference that document once I have time to dig for it.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12cfmC0TZhAzPnAh57IV67YT-hGPKVZutaKNxgNW2dno/edit?tab=t.0> This was relatively easy to find - you can see a similar discussion about Afghanistan that happened here.

AP - Agree with everything above. First topic has way too much going on. Agree with the proposed wording and with pinning down a name for the Syrian government. I am concerned about "diplomatic efforts" because efforts seems to mean the aff gets to generate offense from any attempt at diplomacy, which maybe makes it harder to generate sticky DA links? Not sure I have a better suggestion but I agree that diplomacy is not limiting enough. I just don't think "efforts" fixes it...maybe "diplomatic activities - International treaties, agreements, alliances, and other manifestations of international relations"?

KPL - A couple of thoughts on the discussion. I believe that Brent is probably right about the *government* being called the Syrian transitional government but the *nation-state* is still called the Syrian Arab Republic. I worry that the Syrian transitional government (or HTS) may change its name before the tournament, which would moot almost any aff prep. The USFG doesn't have any official bilateral relations with Syria in the squo. Maybe "The United States federal government should establish official bilateral diplomatic relations with the government of the Syrian Arab Republic." I think this solved both Adeja and Brent's concerns with the huge aff and the problem of the name of the government. The aff is limited to one action and the issue of the government changing doesn't no-link the aff.

BN - I like KPL's compromise wording here. I'm going to sit with for a while and consider alternatives, but that makes sense to me.

AL - Kyle's most recent topic makes sense.

AP - also a fan of Kyle's new wording, however don't see the utility of the inclusion of the word "official" unless this is a term of art (I would almost certainly write exploitative T-official interps). "The United States federal government should establish bilateral diplomatic relations with the government of the Syrian Arab Republic."

BN - not sure if this was KPL's reasoning, but I assumed it was to avoid any covert affirmatives. Official relations are those done in the open, between authorized actors, etc. If we don't include the word 'official,' the affs gain a ton of secretive stuff that we don't want on the table. At least, that's what I thought when I read it.

KPL - We have unofficial bilateral relations with them now. But yes, I also don't want a bunch of secret affs. I think "formal bilateral relations" is the term of art we are looking for (i.e. state sanctioned, opening an embassy, sending an ambassador, etc). I think you can still read T-formal if you reaaaaaally wanted to.

BN - I'm also seeing the phrase 'official relations' throughout the literature. I think this is a situation where we're likely splitting hairs. We can't control the T debates, just make sure the aff has a clear direction to work in. I prefer writing a res that is clear to the aff and then letting them defend that aff against the neg. To that end, I think we should try to agree on a phrase, probably 'official relations' or 'formal bilateral relations' to use in the res: "The USfg should establish [relations] with the government of the SAR." I think official is a bit soft, maybe less definitive in what it means. But I'm concerned that 'bilateral' may require the aff to fiat that the government of SAR accepts instead of making solvency arguments that they accept.

June - I agree that either "formal" or "official" is necessary. I don't have a strong preference between the two, although it sounds formal is better to some degree. I am also concerned about "bilateral" requiring the government of SAR to accept, which seems like multi-actor fiat to me. Is the topic still functional if we just remove that word and say diplomatic instead? "The United States federal government should establish [formal/official] diplomatic relations with the government of the Syrian Arab Republic."

AP - That explanation makes perfect sense to me - I am partial to "formal" over "official" but if "official bilateral relations" is a term of art in the topic literature then I think that's fine and gives affs a clean we meet to T. I use T as a filter for res flaws - so that's the only reason I mention exploitative T interps - if they're possible and the aff can't read easy defense to get out of them I think that's an issue with the res. I see Brent's concern with "bilateral" but genuinely don't think that is as intuitive of an argument. I also think "they say yes/no" is core neg ground on relations topics so I think bilateral is fine. I think the only thing the aff has to fiat is that the U.S establishes relations, however whether or not Syria accepts is a link debate that I think ought to happen,

and there is an even distribution of ground for the aff on “they say yes” and for the neg on “they say no”. I also don’t think it’s multi-actor fiat because the actor in the res is the USFG, not Syria, Syria becomes an object of the res while the USFG is the subject.

AL - Agree with Adeja; I prefer formal as a lit-based term. “Official” doesn’t confer the same rules-bound relationship.

June - I don’t think it’s as simple as Syria saying yes/no being a core part of the debate. In order for the aff to be topical, the plan has to fiat the creation of bilateral relations - even if the plan extends US relations and the aff reads normal means arguments for why Syria says yes, that’s still FX-T insofar as the creation of bilateral relations is contingent on the downstream solvency of the plan. The only way for the aff to be fully topical is to fiat bilateral relations, which requires fiatted action for the SAR.

BN - June’s explanation is my issue with ‘bilateral’ in the res. For the relations to be topical, they must be bilateral, but to be bilateral, Syria must say yes. So the aff doesn’t have a yes/no solvency argument, they fiat the Syria says yes debate. Again, I see both formal and official used in the literature and it seems to be a stylistic choice by different orgs, at least based on my limited reading. Is anyone seeing a definitional distinction between the two?

AP - Here is my thought process on “bilateral”. Since the action of the res is for the U.S to “establish” bilateral relations, that means the aff does not have to fiat that Syria accepts. “Establish” to me does not imply that the relations have to be accepted by Syria, especially because Syria is not an actor in the resolution, but an object of the action. So, I think the only thing the wording of the res mandates that the aff does is establish relations with Syria that are bilateral in nature (meaning they are relations that the aff is only establishing with Syria) however that doesn’t mean that the relations have to include Syria’s consent. “Bilateral” is a modifier on who the relations are established towards, but does not require Syria to be a consenting party. That is something that would (and should) happen on the solvency level of the debate.

BN - I think that clarifies your position well. However, I don’t think bilateral is necessary for that purpose, because the relations are necessarily bilateral because the only two countries in the res are the US and Syria. This seems to be a debate that’d be resolved by extra-t, that you can’t include other countries, only the ones in the res, while still avoiding the murky solvency waters. I think a holistic reading of the res with or without bilateral means functionally the same thing, but I’m concerned about putting the word bilateral in the pressure cooker of prep and what goofy stuff comes out of that.

AP - yeah to be fair, I think removing the word bilateral would resolve your concern. However, it does open up negatives to affs that explode limits by including other countries. But, I think that’s a fine T debate for the neg to have access to.

AL - "bilateral" probably isn't necessary to have the same discussions, although I don't know if we can get "formal" relations without its inclusion. If we drop "formal" then something like "The United States federal government should significantly increase its diplomatic engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic." might make sense. This allows for the diplomacy piece but doesn't require fiatting of Syria-says-yes.

BN - I'm not sure I understand why they can't be 'formal relations' without the word bilateral. I've seen both 'formal relations' and 'official relations' used throughout the literature base as I read on this topic and most of the time, bilateral is only used to clarify when another country has been mentioned.

AL - As I read it, "formal diplomatic relations" is a term of art that involves both parties. Bilateral relations and formal diplomacy are thus the same thing? I don't think there's a ton of offense that can be derived in the distinction though. Regardless, "increase engagement" feels staunchly US only action.

BN - "Engagement," as I understand it also includes aid, which I think is fine to include if we're concerned about the relations phrasings. I like relations as a subset of the broader "engagement" question, but I think expanding the aff also has its merits. I could see a version of the resolution that is "increase diplomatic engagement" or "increase formal/official relations" - happy with either.

June - I think something along the lines of formal or official is necessary for aff inherency - like KPL said above, we have a lot of unofficial/informal relations with the government of SAR now.

My understanding is that "bilateral" doesn't mean just between two countries, but rather it means an agreement that definitively requires the active engagement of both parties. See "bilateral trade agreement." I think the issue is that if we include bilateral, in order for the aff to be topical they must lead to Syria saying yes. On Adeja's point - bilateral does require Syria to be a consenting party - if Syria says no, the relation is not bilateral, it is unilateral. I think removing bilateral allows the "Syria says yes/no" debate to still exist - if the aff extends diplomatic relations and Syria does not engage with them, or ignores them or rejects them, that's important case ground for debaters to sort through. In my mind it's the difference of whether we let this question be resolved on the case level or on the T level - we should pick case.

BN - ^This is a good call back. We also need to avoid these behind-the-scenes deals and affs that can occur in secret or in more tricky ways

AL - Can we just make the action explicit? "The United States federal government should recognize the Syrian transitional government as the *de jure* government of the Syrian Arab Republic."? This avoids the fiat question and gets to the core question of formal ties (recognition is the necessary step 1). I'm not a huge fan of "Syrian transitional government" but it seems lit

based. Topics like this have also been worded like this in the NPTE before with the PRC Taliban topic in 2022.

June - I would be happy with that. I have a small concern that there is only one topical aff under that version of the resolution, whereas other versions can allow the aff to parameterize the types of official relations the United States extends to Syria, but despite the lack of plan-level aff flex I think there's still advantage-level flex – the aff can derive offense from many different types of advantages here. And perhaps limiting aff flex is a good thing here - subjectively I think this topic is harder for the neg than the aff anyways. So, I am good with it.

BN - I think the concern here and why we didn't choose this wording earlier was that STG may not be the government by the time the tournament happens. It's just a complicated situation that we should try to avoid taking too firm of a position on. The relations approach to the topic kept the topic relevant if the situation changes significantly in the interim.

Alex's phrasing: "The United States federal government should significantly increase its diplomatic engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic." works for me. It may need to acknowledge the government and be changed to 'engagement with the government of the SAR.' but overall, I think this broadly captures what we want.

AP - I am also partial to Brent's above wording and see the logic behind bilateral v unilateral, however I will clarify that it's not the word bilateral but the word "establish" that I think controls the aff's burden. That's why I don't think the aff needs to fiat that Syria accepts, although that would be the condition for them being bilateral, but not the condition of the U.S action to establish. That means Syria's consent has to be a solvency debate, because the aff can't fiat Syria's action anyway because the topic constrains them to the U.S being the only actor they can fiat action for. But, I think I'm getting unnecessarily game-sy about it. Engagement seems to be flexible enough that the aff can parametracize but stable enough for DA links to remain sticky. I agree that official/formal is necessary for the inherency debate. I'd be satisfied with that compromise.

June - I agree with all this, and this explanation of the bilateral stuff makes sense to me! I think regardless of the FX-T dimension of the bilateral question, it sounds like we're all in agreement that 'bilateral' isn't necessary if we change the res to 'diplomatic engagement' like Alex and Brent outlined. I agree with Alex's phrasing echoed in Brent's most recent post.

KPL - "The United States federal government should significantly increase its official diplomatic engagement with the government of the Syrian Arab Republic" is good enough for me, but I still think we should include official. I still think that a plan that uses the CIA to establish a blacksite on Syrian soil to house political dissidents is still topical under this and while it is probably possible to predict, I think that limiting the aff to official, above-board actions is net better for this topic where the question comes down to strength of link.

BN - I'll sign on for KPL's above wording.

AP - I'm also on board for Kyle's wording.

June - I'm happy with that as well!

AL - looks good to me!

BN - moved to final wordings and posted widely!

East Africa

[Topic Paper](#)

KPL - I am cool with the topic as submitted "The East African Community Partner States should establish the East African Federation."

June - I agree (Go Bears)

BN - this one feels very straightforward to me, no edits needed.

AP - agree

AL - looks good to me

BN - moved this one to finalized wording (Go Bears)

Bolivia

Topic Paper

KPL - I have some inherency concerns -

<https://www.pv-magazine.com/2025/01/16/bolivias-ylb-signs-lithium-deals-with-russian-chinese-companies/> I am not sure if this is different from the Lithium and Evaporite Resources Law. I can't seem to find anything particular about this law. I want to say that "The Plurinational State of Bolivia should significantly increase investment in direct lithium extraction" is the least inherency-prone argument. Still, I am unsure if this is a significantly different debate than the other lithium topic.

June - I agree with the inherency concerns. It seems like Bolivia is going to be increasing its lithium extraction for this deal with China and Russia - even if it doesn't textually encompass the Lithium and Evaporite Resources Law, it definitely encompasses the aff harms. I'm unsure what to do here as well. My inclination is we should find another potential topic that is related enough to Bolivia and lithium extraction while being inherent and distinct from the other topic - I think inherency/debatibility is more important than sticking with the topic paper. But if other people disagree that's legit!

BN - I'd like to explore the topic as voted on before we pivot, but we certainly do have flexibility if the inherency issues and debatibility concerns compound. My first thought on this topic is that we should consider modifiers, like adding "its" to investment. That would mean not just allowing Russian and Chinese extraction, which seems to be the status quo, but more independent actions. We might also consider more significant modifications, like "monetary investment," "infrastructure investment," "financial investment," etc. to attempt to narrow the topic in a way that makes it specific to Bolivia and their current conditions. I have this topic on my reading list for Monday to try to get more clarity on the situation and come back with more proposals.

AP - generally, I agree that inherency is more important than sticking with the topic paper, but if it's possible to narrow the topic and inherency-proof it while sticking to the topic paper we should attempt that first. I will absolutely exploit a non-inherent topic if the option is available and it likely would not end up being a debate about Bolivia or lithium...I imagine others would too. I like the suggestion of making specific modifications to investment and I think that could produce a debate that feels unique to the other lithium topic.

BN - I don't know how the 2022 topic committee keeps being relevant, but we had a similar inherency concern regarding the Ukraine topic we used that year. There were a lot of moving parts that made any specific resolutorial action impossible to commit to, for fear it would happen before the tournament. We settled on 'USFG should significantly increase its military involvement in Ukraine.' Later in the process, when the war kept escalating and US support started, we decided to stick to that wording because 'significantly increase' insulated us from some of the inherency question. You can always increase from a lot to even more. That

experience certainly doesn't map 1:1 here, but I think it's a good thing to consider as we think about what inherency means on this topic and how we might phrase it.

KPL - What if we switched increase to decrease? That way it is the same topic, just the action is different and it doesn't seem like Bolivia has any plans in the squo to reduce investment. I also concur with adding "its". This also makes the debate different than the other resource topics and keeps (as much as possible) the intent of the topic writers. Adding "the government" as well to protect the actor. "The government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia should significantly decrease its investment in direct lithium extraction."

AL - I don't have major concerns about inherency actually. Large scale Chinese/Russian investments have been [happening for years](#), this doesn't seem to solve all aff offense. There are 2 ways I think we can take this - either the "significantly increase" route or (like the US lithium topic) add "its" to investment to constrain financing to Bolivia.

KPL - While I think Alex is right that Russian and Chinese investment is happening now, it seems like squo Bolivia is taking action to increase their own investment through the YLB to meet the demands of Russia and China (see above). There are only 4 results on Google for the Lithium and Evaporate Resources Law and they all say the same thing. While I think that alleviates some of the inherency concern (given the law hasn't passed) Bolivia is already investing its resources into direct lithium extraction now. While the "significantly" argument does again alleviate some inherency concern, I think this then becomes a question of solvency and FX-T and I really think this debate will come down to an argument on strength of the internal links because squo seems to be solving.

News

<https://news.goalfore.com/detail/77640/bolivias-ylb-signs-lithium-deals-with-russian-chinese-companies.html>

<https://www.jeromecardan.com/search/>

The LER Law Text

<https://diputados.gob.bo/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/PL-012-2024-2025.pdf> (Spanish)

From what I can tell - the law doesn't seem to materially change investment, but rather reappropriates the investment into some form of nationalization of the resources. Maybe this is a better angle? It's less about investment and more about the regulation of the resources. It seems like the investment already happened and this law is basically a contract to negotiate the investment. Although the YLB is already a state-owned corporation, this law seems to renegotiate the distribution of revenue from foreign led resource extraction, but my Spanish is not great and we may benefit from getting a native Spanish speaker to review this law for us to determine what an inherent, non effectual, significant action would be that the government could take (I am working on this rn). I am 100% sure that decreasing lithium extraction is all of those though ;)

Update- Thank you to Abigail Morey from El Camino College and Jimena Castillo from SDSU for helping me with understanding this law. The purpose of the law is to establish a contract between the government and private corporations to extract lithium deposits. The law establishes an undefined budget and royalty payment to the local community as well as promoting the construction of DLE technology.

Update 2- It is a regulation and does not increase investment, just regulates existing and future contracts between YLB, the state, and foreign companies.

BN - I'm coming around to the switch from increase to decrease. It functionally switches the affirmative and negative ground in the topic paper, which is maybe not ideal, but captures the same discussion. My bigger concern is with the lack of resources available for students to write files. I think that rules out any of the LER topic phrasings. Increase is probably fine, but given the other lithium topic and the general inherency concerns (Russia and China contracts), I think it is at least worth considering changing the action.

KPL - Sorry for really nerding out over this topic, after this one I promise I will stop. I really think the key component of this debate coming down to the definition of significantly just doesn't sit right with me. If the harms of the aff are being materially resolved in the squo, I just don't see the value of having the debate even if it is technically inherent. There's only scraps of uniqueness to be fought over for both sides and even if there is, the link probably controls the uniqueness anyway (and the converse for the neg).

BN kpriorlandman@sdsu.edu can you clarify this comment above? What is your proposed wording?

June - I like switching 'increase' to 'decrease' and flipping the direction of the aff and the neg. I think this might be the sweet spot we've alluded to above between finding an inherent topic and staying within the topic paper. Plus, in the context of the discussion above about Bolivia's relationship with China and Russia, I think this allows unique and specific offense about why lithium mining in Bolivia's position might be a good/bad thing, rather than whether lithium mining is good or bad in general, which I think the first topic captures effectively. For example, the aff could defend decreasing lithium investment and derive almost all of its advantage-level offense from why it's good for Bolivia to develop economic independence from China and Russia. I could see arguments about BRICS tying it. TLDR: flipping the direction of the topic allows Bolivia/China/Russia relations to become a part of the aff uniqueness, which allows for nuanced debates not captured in other topics. I am very pro.

I think this is the only way to resolve the inheritance concerns. I do not think 'its' resolves inherency - my understanding is that the lithium Bolivia is mining in the squo, while being produced with the intent of trading to China and Russia, is still being mined by the government of Bolivia. Adding 'its' does nothing because Bolivia is already the actor mining the lithium. And, I don't think 'significantly' provides a clean resolution to the uniqueness question in this case either. I think as illustrated in the 2022 example, 'significantly' protects us from anything but a brink scenario - a large, "significant" change in the situation. In 2022, the topic would have been

inherent if the USFG sent some more troops to Ukraine, but it would have become uninherent if the USFG had launched a full military invasion requiring the total mobilization of all aspects of the military. Similarly in this situation, my understanding of the article sent by KPL is that the recent increase in Bolivia's lithium mining is a very significant increase. Bolivia has had a deal of the same kind with China and Russia for a while, as Alex pointed out, but this new deal dramatically increases all aspects of the deal. It's a significant increase.

Bolivia's Ministry of Hydrocarbons and Energy (MHE) said that Uranium One and CBC would "invest more than \$2 billion, covering 100% of the construction cost and assuming full financial risk," as per the contracts.

The industrial plants will be located south of the Salar de Uyuni salt flat and use the Direct Lithium Extraction (DLE) method, "which allows for the recovery of more than 80% of the available lithium, consumes less water and energy, and is much more efficient compared to the traditional evaporation pool method, whose yield does not exceed 30%," the MHE added.

The contract between YLB and Uranium One provides for the implementation of an industrial plant for the production of 14,000 metric tons per year of lithium carbonate in three phases, with an investment of more than \$975 million.

As part of its deal, CBC will invest \$1.03 billion for the implementation of two industrial plants, each in two phases, one with a capacity of 25,000 metric tons per year and another of 10,000 metric tons per year.

^^ from [KPL's article](#)

If we flip the direction of the topic, this provides a clear uniqueness story for both sides. The aff says that the squo is bad because of this new deal. The neg says the squo is good because of it. "The Plurinational State of Bolivia should significantly decrease its investment in direct lithium extraction."

(Even though adding 'its' doesn't resolve the inherency concerns, I still think its consistent with best practices because it limits the ability of the aff to mess with aspects of the squo we're not considering).

AP - I think I am most out of my depth on this topic but it sounds like "decrease" is much more inherent than "increase" and I do think it resolves most of the concerns of this thread. However, does that mean the only topical aff is rollback of the squo? In other words, can the aff still fiat a "significant decrease" without having Bolivia pull out of the RU/CH deal? I don't think one topical

aff topics are bad, just curious if that is our understanding of how this res wording distributes ground given the uniqueness scenario. However, I am still partial to changing “increase” to “decrease”.

AL - Given discussion, I am okay with swapping to decrease. If I were affirming decrease, I probably wouldn't feel constrained to only Russia/China deals as [other countries](#) are certainly involved in other projects. I don't think these affs jump out as better than Russia/China but its not constrained to 1 topical aff in my reading. June's wording is good.

BN - I'm good with decrease. I think this is our best solution and June's wording looks good to me. I'm also concerned about maybe not “one T aff” but “one good T aff” - but even then, this is the nature of the beast on this topic.

BN - Just want to clarify that we're all good with June's proposed wording before I finalize this topic: “The Plurinational State of Bolivia should significantly decrease its investment in direct lithium extraction.”

AP - I'm good here.

KPL - I am good here too.

BN - Going to move this one to final. Very clever solution to the problem and I think we did a good job of maintaining the core of the debate that voters wanted. Good job!