

Force and Strategy
Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, PhD
Tufts University
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Debate on Soft Balancing Against the U.S.

Debating Global Reactions to U.S. Preponderance

Readings:

- Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1 (summer 2005): 7-45.
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "International Relations Theory and the Case against Unilateralism," *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 3, no. 3 (September 2005): 509-524.
- Seyom Brown, *The Illusion of Control: Force and Foreign Policy in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), pp. 1-15 and pp. 49-77.
- *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 22 March 2006) Available on the White House website:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>

The Resolution

The students in PS160 will stage a parliamentary debate on the following resolution:

"RESOLVED, in the wake of the ongoing Iraq war and in reaction to the George W. Bush administration's national security strategies, regional great powers, such as Russia and the People's Republic of China, as well as middle powers, such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea, are beginning to engage in soft balancing against the United States."

Robert A. Pape, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, defines the term soft balancing as follows:

“Soft balancing involves tacit balancing short of formal alliances. It occurs when states generally develop ententes or limited security understandings with one another to balance a potentially threatening state or a rising power. Soft balancing is often based on a limited arms buildup, ad hoc cooperative exercises, or collaboration in regional or international institutions; these policies may be converted to open, hard-balancing strategies if and when security competition becomes intense and the powerful state becomes threatening.”

The Rules [1]

The class will divide into two of teams: one arguing in favor of the resolution (the Government) and the other team arguing against the resolution (the Opposition). Each team's objective is to persuade the Speaker of the House (Prof. Taliaferro) through a carefully and reasoned presentation of relevant international relations theories and empirical evidence. Each team will be responsible for selecting its own principal spokesperson (the Prime Minister in the case of the Government and the Leader of the Loyal Opposition in the case of the Opposition).

Objective of the Debate

The Government must affirm the resolution by presenting and defending a sufficient case for that resolution. The Opposition must oppose the resolution and/or the proposition team's case. If, at the end of the debate, the judge believes that the proposition team has supported and successfully defended the resolution, the judge will declare them the winner. Otherwise the opposition will be declared the winner.

The Speaker reminds both teams to base their opening statements, affirmative and negative arguments, rebuttals, and closing statements on the reading materials assigned for this week and empirical evidence. Do not engage in ad hominem and/or partisan attacks. Refrain from making hyperbolic statements.

During the Debate

The only printed material that the Government and the Opposition may bring into the chamber (Nelson Auditorium) will be the reading materials assigned for the week of 18-20 September. These include the two articles from the journals *International Security* and *Perspectives on Politics*, Seyom Brown's book, *The Illusion of Control*, and the Bush administration's 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

The Government and the Opposition may refer to any information that is within the realm of knowledge of educated and informed persons. If they believe some cited information to be too specific, debaters may request that their opponent explain specific information with which they are unfamiliar. In the event further explanation of specific information is requested, the debater should provide details sufficient to allow the debater to understand the connection between the information and the claim. The Speaker will disallow specific information only in the event that no reasonable person could have access to the information (e.g., the genetic history of the opposing team's family).

Format of the Debate:

First Proposition Constructive: 8 minutes

First Opposition Constructive: 8 minutes

Second Proposition Constructive: 8 minutes

Second Opposition Constructive: 8 minutes

Opposition Rebuttal: 5 minutes

Proposition Rebuttal: 5 minutes

Total Debate Time: 50 minutes

Constructive Speeches and Rebuttals

Introduction of new arguments is appropriate during all constructive speeches. However, in the rebuttal speeches, the debates should refrain from introducing new arguments.

¹ Adapted from the Rules of the National Parliamentary Debate Association, revised November 2005