Taking Global Positions

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In dealing with global issues, do superpowers prioritize national interest or global collaboration?
Superpower Positions

• Superpower responses to international events
• Which events?
  • Syrian Crisis
  • G20 Summit (Paris)
  • UN Climate Change Conference (Paris)
Syrian Crisis: Russia’s Position

• Russia and Syria are allies
  • Russia sees Assad as a bulwark against ISIS
  • Russia has material interests in Syria
• #1 arms supplier to Syrian government
• Few (if any) Syrian refugees in Russia
  • 4 million total refugees
• Blames US and the West for Syrian crisis
Syrian Crisis: Germany’s Position

• Feels the government of Syria, led by President Assad, needs to participate in negotiations, in agreement with Russia, China, Iran, and India

• Most directly impacted by Syrian refugee crisis
  • Almost 1 million refugees have entered Germany

• No military action in Syria

• Participating in peace talks in Geneva
Syrian Crisis: US’s Position

- Wants Assad to step down and secure democratic elections
- Supplies arms and training to Syrian rebels
- Leading attack on ISIS in Syria primarily through airstrikes
- $4.11B in humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees
- Has taken in about 2,200 refugees since 2012
Syrian Crisis: China’s Position

• Supports the Assad regime
• China is #3 arms supplier (#1 Russia, #2 Iran) to Syrian government
  • Also #2 arms supplier to Iran
• $16M in humanitarian aid to Syria
• No Syrian refugees in China
• Participating in peace talks in Geneva
• China says the US is partly responsible for Syrian issue
• **History of G20**
  - Forum for Finance Ministers and central bankers created after 1998 financial crisis
  - In 2008, elevated to include highest political officials

• **What are the goals?**
  - Broaden dialogue on key economic and financial issues
  - “Achieve stable and sustainable world economic growth that benefits all”
  - Facilitate international economic cooperation

• **Impact of Paris Attacks**
Paris Attacks
November 13, 2015
The bloody siege of Paris

The New York Times
PARIS TERRORIST ATTACKS KILL OVER 100;
FRANCE DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY

November 13, 2015
G20: Russia’s Position

• Russian foreign relations dominated its role at G20
• Putin discussed Russia’s desire to restore multilateral relations

“We never renounced good relations with our partners in the East or the West. And the unilateral measures limiting our cooperation in various areas were initiated by our partners, not us. If our partners now feel that the time has come to somehow change our relations, we welcome this; we never renounced joint work or closed our doors.”
- Putin
G20: Germany’s Position

- Discussion of Syrian refugee policies
  - EU states should not refuse to take in Syrians simply because of Paris attack
  - “All G20 countries share responsibility associated with this crisis. Solidarity should be at the core of our decisions.”
  - Germany is one of the most welcoming countries out of the EU to Syrian refugees
    - Chancellor Angela Merkel suggested a quota system to distribute refugees evenly across the EU
G20: US’s Position

• US Treasury official encouraged G20 members to resist protectionism
  • Reference to China’s currency devaluation
• Obama reiterated US position on Syria with Putin
  • In favor of reaching an agreement to end violence in Syria
  • President Assad cannot be a part of that process
• Obama vowed to strengthen fight against ISIS
  • Strategy will remain the same (not adding ground troops)
G20: China’s Position

• China is hosting next year’s G20
  • Last hosted in 2005, when China was world’s 5th largest economy
  • Wants to take advantage of hosting privilege

• Broader goal of strengthening the global economic system
  • Ability to withstand declining value of currency, less reliant on US dollar
  • Will incorporate Yuan into IMF’s reserve-currency unit
Climate Summit

• Who was involved?
  • All 196 UN member states attended the climate change talks and negotiated the Paris Agreement

• Paris Agreement
  • Aims to keep global warming under 2 degrees Celsius by reducing emissions

• Final agreement has not gone into force
Climate Summit: Russia’s Position

• Background
  • Russia had been important for climate talks
  • Since end of communism in 1989, Russian economy has not been strong

• Climate agreements could be very good for Russian economy
  • Russia has lots of natural gas
  • Europe uses lots of Russian gas
  • Low-carbon ‘transition fuel’
  • Climate action could increase consumption of Russian gas
Climate Summit: Germany’s Position

• EU wanted climate agreement to be legally binding
  • Without treaty status, agreements are not enforceable
• Germany led the way in the Climate Summit
• Goal: to develop climate-friendly energy solutions
  • Integrating renewable energy storage cells into country’s grid
  • Curb carbon emissions
Climate Summit: US’s Position

• The US’s first climate change policy in 2014 (to slash greenhouse pollution from coal-fired power plants) led the way to the Paris accord

• In 2014, China and the US (world’s two largest gas polluters) announced they would work together to cut gas emissions

• US Congress does not want to approve the agreement in fear of the effects it may have on the US economy.

“This agreement sends a powerful signal that the world is fully committed to a low-carbon future. We’ve shown that the world has both the will and the ability to take this challenge.”
Climate Summit: China’s Position

• China is world’s largest carbon emitter
  • Two-thirds of China’s energy comes from coal
  • China issued permits for +150 coal-fired power plants in 2015

• China defended its position
  • Replacing inefficient power plants
  • Dramatically increasing clean energy capacity
    • Reduces global cost for renewable energy
  • Bilateral agreement with US in 2014
Review

• Russia
  • Allied with Syria
  • Wants to improve foreign relations
  • Economy would benefit from climate agreement

• Germany
  • Heavily impacted by Syrian refugees
  • Diverse pressing concerns
  • Wants increased enforcement of international agreements
Review

• United State of America
  • Leading role in Syria
  • Firm position on military and economy policy
  • Wants climate commitment from developing countries

• China
  • Allied with Syria
  • Preparing to lead G20
  • Defends current emission and development rates