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TEACHING CHINA'S GLOBAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGY THROUGH THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR: A CASE-BASED SYLLABUS IN PRACTICE

Key words: Chinese diplomacy, conflict resolution, the Russo-Ukrainian war, syllabus.

This thesis presents the pedagogical framework, syllabus structure, and practical implementation of a university-level course titled *China and Global Conflict Resolution: The Case Study of the Russo-Ukrainian War*, taught in the Spring 2025 semester at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The course was designed in response to growing global interest in China's role as a diplomatic actor amid contemporary geopolitical crises. It offers students the opportunity to explore Chinese foreign policy in real time by focusing on its position in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine. The course provides a case-based methodology that combines theoretical grounding with the analysis of diplomatic behavior, official rhetoric, and global responses.

The syllabus was structured into three pedagogical modules. The first module focused on the foundations of Chinese diplomacy, including the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the role of ideology in shaping foreign policy, and China's historical relationships with key powers such as the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Nations. Students examined primary texts, including speeches by Chinese leaders, alongside academic literature by Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell (2012), Suisheng Zhao (2023), Xuetong Yan (2014) and others. This module served as the conceptual base to equip students with the tools needed to analyze current policy behavior.

The second module applied this framework to the Russo-Ukrainian war, encouraging students to critically evaluate how China navigates a conflict. Topics included China's official neutrality, peace proposals, narrative

diplomacy, and the evolution of Sino-Ukrainian relations. Students analyzed documents such as China's 12-point peace plan, public statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and relevant academic critiques, including those by Maria Repnikova and Wendy Weile Zhou (2024), Vita Golod and Olga Drobotiuk (2025), Xiaoyu Lu, Tinghao Zhang (2024). Guest speakers, including scholars and diplomats, were invited to offer diverse perspectives and stimulate interactive dialogue.

The third module explored broader implications of China's strategy under Xi Jinping, including its relations with the United States, the European Union, Taiwan, and the Global South. This section aimed to situate China's positioning within the larger framework of its "great power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics". Sources included policy analysis from think tanks such as Chatham House, the Atlantic Council, and the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies. Students were encouraged to assess the consistency and evolution of China's global diplomacy through a comparative lens.

The course employed a hybrid methodology combining lecture, seminar-style discussion, and research-based learning. Weekly assignments included discussion board posts that prompted students to engage with assigned readings and develop critical responses to key questions. These questions included: How do historical principles of Chinese diplomacy shape its current foreign policy? In what ways does China balance its economic and political ties with Russia and Ukraine? How does China's mediation strategy differ from U.S. approaches to conflict resolution? Similar methodology has been employed in other academic settings, including the case study-based course design analyzed by Heo and Bohte (2009), which emphasizes applied learning in international conflict studies. A similar experiential methodology is also outlined by Kolb (2014), whose model of learning through reflection and direct engagement supports the integration of current geopolitical crises into classroom practice. Their approach validates the pedagogical effectiveness of integrating real-world conflict analysis, structured hypothesis testing, and student-led research in political science education.

Midway through the semester, students delivered recorded PowerPoint presentations analyzing a particular theme or case relevant to China's role in global conflict. The final assignment was a research paper requiring each student to formulate a hypothesis related to Chinese diplomacy and test it using academic sources, primary documents, and course materials. Sample hypotheses included: "China's peace proposal in Ukraine serves more as a narrative strategy than a genuine diplomatic initiative", and "China's engagement in the Global South reflects a consistent logic of non-interference and strategic economic interest".

The course syllabus prioritized open-access materials to ensure inclusivity and adaptability. Texts included excerpts from Xi Jinping's

speeches, PRC white papers, Foreign Affairs essays, and scholarly articles by experts in Chinese foreign policy and conflict resolution. Students also reviewed Chinese-language sources when available in translation or summary. One pedagogical objective was to expose students to the complexity and nuance of analyzing China's international conduct, often oversimplified in Western discourse. The course also draws from my own expertise in Chinese foreign policy and conflict resolution, as well as my academic and media publications on the Russo-Ukrainian war and Sino-Ukrainian relations. These contributions enriched the course content and provided students with direct insights into original research and field-based perspectives.

Feedback from students highlighted the value of examining real-time events within an academic framework. They appreciated the opportunity to compare different diplomatic paradigms and noted that the course deepened their understanding of how foreign policy is shaped by ideology, history, and strategic necessity. The inclusion of Ukrainian and Chinese sources also prompted reflection on the ethical and geopolitical tensions underlying scholarly engagement with current wars.

This thesis contributes to the evolving field of practice-based political science education. It demonstrates how instructors can incorporate contemporary conflicts into the curriculum without sacrificing academic rigor or objectivity. By analyzing China's role in the Russo-Ukrainian war, students not only gained insight into Beijing's diplomacy but also acquired transferable skills in policy analysis, critical thinking, and comparative research.

The broader relevance of this case-based syllabus extends beyond China studies. It serves as a model for integrating live geopolitical crises into higher education, bridging the gap between theory and practice. The Russo-Ukrainian war, with its global consequences and contested narratives, offers a particularly rich case for examining diplomacy, neutrality, great-power competition, and the role of non-Western actors in international conflict resolution.

In conclusion, *China and Global Conflict Resolution: The Case Study of the Russo-Ukrainian War* exemplifies how teaching can remain responsive to global developments while grounding students in theoretical and methodological discipline. The course design encourages students to think beyond binaries and adopt a nuanced, evidence-based perspective on international affairs. It reflects an interdisciplinary approach that integrates history, political science, diplomacy, and international law, creating a robust educational experience grounded in contemporary relevance and academic integrity.

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