Fair Trade Is Fairer Trade  
Affirmative Case by Nathaniel Arroyave



The Negative is most likely to say something along the lines of a defense of capitalism: “Free markets are the only way to ensure that everyone has a car in their garage and food on their tables, and if we allow the Affirmative to spread socialism, you can kiss goodbye to freedom and individualism.” This case is meant to combat the “socialism vs. capitalism” debate that the Negative may choose to frame. We’re not at all proposing that governments run everything. We can freely admit that this is a bad idea. We don’t need to worry about this today. All we need to do is stick the Negative to a very specific idea: **Valuing free trade over fair-trade means taking away regulations whenever possible.**

This is a powerful statement if impacted correctly. After all, tariffs and subsidies are regulations, sure. But so are taxes, safety regulations, workplace-ethics laws, and basic concepts of market fairness. We need to show the judge that the Negative’s mindset ultimately leads to a toxic value of ‘what the market wants’ over what people need. Free trade left on its own, without any concern for fairness, often leads to exploitation. What use is an economy built on a morally bankrupt foundation? Money, after all, is fake. People are real.

**Valuing free trade over fair-trade means taking away regulations when given the option, moral or not**. The Negative will try to dismiss this idea as extreme but remember: the resolution is presenting us with a general statement. We are given no qualifiers. Free trade isn’t automatically given the boundaries of morality and ethics. Fair trade is the only approach that has a moral concept (fairness) within itself. Take one of two roads with this case: 1. If the Negative seeks to assert some moral high-ground or moral boundaries on free trade, turn their framework. Point out that their boundaries (Most likely their value and resolutional analyses) are inherently violated by free trade, since we are only discussing deregulating markets. Point out that these boundaries aren’t within the resolution, and as such should not be allowed in the round. 2. If the Negative doesn’t assert the moral high-ground, turn their applications and your applications to an impact of moral bankruptcy. This does not require you to say that capitalism is bad. Simply point out that because humans are inherently selfish, laws are necessary to ensure that people aren’t trampled. **Remember: Valuing Free Trade means taking away regulations when given the option, moral or not. Valuing fair trade does not mean adding regulations. It simply means choosing to keep regulations in place if they ensure fairness within the market.**

The Negative will want to limit free trade to only nice and pretty and moral things. You want to show the morally bankrupt potential of free trade without the moral boundaries that fair trade offers.

Affirmative

We all have boundaries we don’t cross: one guy may decide he will never fight or kill someone; someone else may decide to never set foot in a Del Taco. Morality is made up of lines as well. As G.K. Chesterton points out, “Art, like morality, consists in drawing the line somewhere.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Today, we’re asking a moral question: When in conflict, should the government value fair trade above free trade? It is because fair trade is the only side with concrete moral boundaries in today’s round that I respond: Yes. When in conflict, governments should value fair trade above free trade.

# Resolutional Analyses:

## When in Conflict:

We are being asked to discuss instances where free trade and fair-trade conflict. Any Applications and Examples that don’t involve this conflict are outside of the scope of our debate.

## As A Rule:

The resolution is a general statement. We are not given qualifiers like ‘most of the time’’ or ‘when it’s a good idea’. We are being asked to make a blanket moral statement of either: Yes, governments should value fair trade over free trade; or no, governments should not value fair trade over free trade.

# Definitions:

**Free Trade:** international trade left to its natural course without tariffs, quotas, or other restrictions.[[2]](#footnote-2) (Oxford)

**Fair:** in accordance with the rules or standards.[[3]](#footnote-3) (Oxford)

**Trade:** The action of buying and selling goods and services[[4]](#footnote-4) (Oxford)

**Fair Trade:** The action of buying and selling goods and services in accordance with rules or standards.[[5]](#footnote-5) (Oxford)

Fair trade doesn’t mean paying producers money despite poor quality goods or just because we feel bad. That’s charity, not fair trade. Fair trade simply means ensuring that consumers aren’t swindled, while ensuring that producers aren’t swindled either.

# Value: Justice

Definition: the quality of being just, impartial, or fair[[6]](#footnote-6)

## Reason to Prefer: Benchmark of governments.

When we judge a government’s actions in the market, we have to determine whether they are enabling justice or enabling injustice. Justice is the only consistent benchmark for weighing a government’s actions.

# Contention: Free Trade Is Inherently Flawed

We are not here to debate whether capitalism is good. That’s not our debate today. We are debating the system of free trade, however, and we need to understand that **free trade is characterized by removing barriers and boundaries.**

## A. Free Trade Means Deregulation

Valuing free trade means removing regulations from the market. This means that in its purest form, free trade means trade with no regulation. No tariffs, no quotas, no subsidies, no regulations on the market. The only regulations in place in free trade systems are the laws of supply and demand. If we value free trade over fair trade, then we allow markets, and human nature, to take their course. Why does that matter?

## B. Deregulation Removes Basic Protections for Consumers

Deregulation doesn’t simply mean removing tariffs and quotas. It also means removing regulations, period. This removes basic protections for consumer safety.

## Application: Product Recalls

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2016, 330 individual products were recalled from production and sale due to safety issues.[[7]](#footnote-7) This totaled 134.2 million units through May 31, 2016.[[8]](#footnote-8) Why does this matter? These products were recalled due to violations of safety regulations. If these regulations were not in place, these products would not have been recalled. The **impact: Deregulation would have unjustly harmed consumer safety.**

## C. Deregulation Removes Protections for Producers

Regulation often protects producers just as much as consumers.

## Application: Patent Laws

Between 1790 and 2000, the US Patent and Trademark Office issued more than 6.5 million patents.[[9]](#footnote-9) Laws that protect the hard work and innovation of business owners and entrepreneurs are regulations of the market. Freeing trade in this scenario means removing those protections for innovators. Freeing businesses to steal products from each other would expose producers to unjust harm. The **impact: Deregulation would have unjustly harmed millions of producers.**

## Application: Rule of Law

Freeing trade means deregulation. As much as the Affirmative would like to pick and choose which regulations we remove, the resolution does not give us the qualifier of only removing regulations we don’t like. We need to understand that all laws are regulations. Deregulation means removing laws, period. Removing regulations can lead to a basic upheaval of the rule of law. The **impact: Deregulation unjustly exposes producers to harm.**

Today, we see that valuing free trade is deregulation. Deregulation of trade unjustly removes basic protections for the consumer and the producer and exposes them to further injustice through a lack of basic legal boundaries. The impact: **Deregulation exposes the market to unjust harm, which goes against government’s basic purpose.** Why does that matter? Our final **impact** is this: **Fair trade is the only approach in today’s round that ensures justice in the market.**

As attractive as free trade sounds, we need to understand that free trade is characterized by a lack of boundaries. That includes a lack of moral boundaries. The only side of the resolution that has any moral boundaries is the Affirmative and fair trade. Voting for the Affirmative is the best way to ensure that moral boundaries are upheld in the market.

Opposing This Case

The Affirmative has ignored something important: we are not discussing these ideas in a vacuum. The Affirmative is acting as if all of morality is on their side and the Negative houses all of the morally bankrupt scoundrels in the world. This simply isn’t true. It isn’t as if all of humanity is on the verge of robbing each other and leaving them in ditches. Certainly, the Affirmative doesn’t expect us to believe that without fair trade regulations, all of humanity would suddenly take up piracy again. Free trade doesn’t mean throwing away the rulebook. It means that we remove barriers from the market so that anyone can buy anything they want without unnecessary legislation.

1. 1928 May 5, Illustrated London News, Our Note Book by G. K. Chesterton, Quote Page 780, Column 1, London, England. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, Lapis Lazuli, 2002: Oxford Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, Lapis Lazuli, 2002: Oxford Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, Lapis Lazuli, 2002: Oxford Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, Lapis Lazuli, 2002: Oxford Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Justice.” Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, 14 July 2018, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Federal Government, United States. “Recall List.” CPSC.gov, CPSC, 2016, www.cpsc.gov/Recalls?search\_api\_views\_fulltext=. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Federal Government, United States. “Recall List.” CPSC.gov, CPSC, 31 May 2016, www.cpsc.gov/Recalls?search\_api\_views\_fulltext=. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Office of the Chief Communications Officer, United States Federal Government. “USPTO Web Database Now Includes All Patents Dating from 1790.” United States Patent and Trademark Office - An Agency of the Department of Commerce, 6 Nov. 2000, www.uspto.gov/about-us/news-updates/uspto-web-database-now-includes-all-patents-dating-1790. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)