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FYI

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Republicans Debate Foreign Policy With China Front and Center
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/13/us-usa-campaign-debate-idUSTRE7AB06F201113>

SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA (Reuters) - In their second debate in a week, Republican candidates directed harsh words at President Obama on a range of foreign policy issues, from Iran to foreign aid to the war in Afghanistan.

Candidates across the stage used the platform of this foreign-policy-themed debate to attack the president for indecisiveness and abdicating America's global leadership. They derided his approach as "leading from behind" - a description first used by an unnamed White House official that has provided considerable ammunition to the president's critics. The Republican hopefuls avoided any mention of the successful May 2 raid on Osama bin Laden's Abbottabad compound.

China, however, was the issue that featured most prominently in questions from both moderators and audience members. Candidates took turns blasting the Chinese for what former executive Herman Cain called "outrageous and unacceptable" economic policies that all agreed disadvantaged American workers and businesses. They also criticized China for its "arms race" (former House Speaker Newt Gingrich), "coddling of North Korea" (former Utah Governor and Ambassador to China Jon Huntsman), and "defense of dictators" (Representative Michele Bachmann).

But it was former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney who got the highest marks in the snap reactions from pundits, for his call for the "power of balance" to guide U.S.-China relations.

Asked whether we were headed for another Cold War, Romney said: "I don't necessarily believe in a balance of power approach to this challenge. That's oldthink. But I do believe in the power of balance. And right now, thanks to President Obama's desire to appease the Chinese, the balance is way off. As President, I will restore it."

After the debate, Romney staffers passed out pamphlets containing what they described as a comprehensive strategy toward China, titled "Getting China Right: The Power of Balance." It included a 5-point plan for the first 100 days of a potential Romney administration.

Former senior White House official David Gergen praised Romney's debate performance. "He was steady, as you'd expect, but he was also smart," Gergen said. "The power of balance is as good a description of how we should handle China as I've heard in the last ten years."

China promises to be one of the few foreign policy issues that will resonate in the general election, as voters worry about the impact of U.S.-China trade on American jobs and economic growth. Romney, the current Republican front-runner, has staked out a defiant line on China, and the White House has toughened its tone in response.

This was the last debate devoted exclusively to foreign policy in the primary season. The next debate is on November 22, sponsored by CNN, the Heritage Foundation, and the American Enterprise Institute.