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Part 1: Resolutional Articles

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Winning Rounds with Meta-Framework

by Travis Herche

**The Problem**

Most value resolutions create conflicts that boil down to a question of which value to use. For instance, the judge might vote based on whether he thinks Life is a higher or lower value than Liberty.

This year, normal value clash will take the back seat to a new battleground. A host of basic questions must be answered, such as:

- Should a country care what happens outside its own borders?

- In moral terms, what is a government? Can it have moral obligations?

- If so, are the moral obligations of government unique from those of individuals?

The answers to such questions come before any understanding of the value. Many debaters this year will choose to run a traditional value structure, but this compromises a chance to get a head start on the real issues. If an affirmative just implies his answers to these questions and waits for the negative to attack, he's on the defensive for the rest of the debate. And these issues cannot be ignored.

**Resolutional Analyses are Insufficient**

Traditional value theory is very robust. Whatever argument you want to make in the context of a value resolution, established theory can probably take care of you. This year, things are a little different.

Resolutional analyses are for clarifying the meaning and scope of the resolution. Example Res. A’s might include:

- The resolution has general scope.

- The resolution is specific to the US federal government.

- The resolution must be proven using real-world examples.

In other words, a Resolutional Analysis helps us understand the resolution: what it means, the burdens it creates, etc. A piece of advocacy that is not directly tied to the resolution doesn’t make sense as a resolutional analysis.

**Contentions are Insufficient**

Contentions serve a very specific and important function in a value case. They apply the resolution to the framework. Contentions can be written using the following formula:

*(Thing in the Resolution)*

*(Connecting Verb)*

*(Bottom of Framework)*

For instance, if your value is Liberty and you have no Criterion, an affirmative contention would read:

*(Thing in the Resolution): Intervention*

*(Connecting Verb) Promotes*

*(Bottom of Framework) Liberty*

I say “Bottom of Framework” because contentions should connect to criteria if you have them - not your value. If your contentions bypass your criterion, you might as well remove the criterion from the case and save yourself some time.

Contentions complete the logical syllogism of your case: Framework, Contention, therefore Resolution.

*Liberty is a Moral Obligation.*

*Intervention Promotes Liberty.*

*Therefore, Intervention is Morally Obligatory.*

Or, expressed in value case terms:

*Value: Liberty*

*Contention: Intervention Promotes Liberty.*

*Resolution: The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.*

Contentions aren’t just a catch-all for any argument you want to run. They are a well-established argument class with a specific and vital function. Diluting this purpose by tossing other arguments in doesn’t destroy your case completely, but it does make it more confusing. And that’s the last thing you want.

**Meta-Frameworks are the Solution**

*A meta-framework establishes an element of advocacy that is needed to understand the framework*. It provides both a place and an argument class for getting a head start on the real debate.

Run meta-frameworks between your definitions/resolutional analyses and your value. Word them with a simple and direct tag. Applications can be appropriate in your meta-framework. Perhaps most important, don’t impact your meta-framework to your value - that reverses the relationship you’re trying to establish. Your value lives in the protective shadow of the meta-framework.

By running the meta-framework in your constructive, you seize the high ground on what will likely be one of the key issues at the end of the round. It’s a happy alternative to using more traditional/confusing case structure or just waiting for your opponent to attack you and then fighting on the defensive in the precious seconds of your rebuttals.

The meta-framework asserts something that prepares us for the value. For instance:

*Governments should care about what happens across the globe. Their top priority should be Liberty*.

***Meta-framework: Morality is Borderless.*** *Moral obligation does not change based on borders; we have the same obligations to all human beings.*

***Value: Liberty.*** *The obligation of government is to advance Liberty. By extension of the meta-framework, we see that this means spreading Liberty to the far corners of the globe.*

*The sole responsibility of a government is the welfare of its citizens.*

***Meta-framework: By and For the People.*** *Government was created by the people, and its sole responsibility is to serve them - in accordance with the social contract.*

***Value: Protection of Citizens.*** *The people created government for their own protection, so that is the measure of a government’s moral obligation.*

You can’t fully understand the meaning and justification of the value without hearing the meta-framework first. As it should be! While most value resolutions don’t need them, this year’s topic screams for this powerful new argument class.

Meta-frameworks were invented last year to answer problems facing a similar NCFCA resolution. At the time, they were met with justified skepticism. Debaters wondered if using meta-frameworks would be stronger and clearer than just stirring the argument into the rest of the case. After a year of competition, the answer is a definite yes. Meta-frameworks performed beyond expectations by immediately taking control of the round and spiking the most common opposing arguments. Judges immediately accept them because the logic behind them is so intuitive: it speaks directly to the elephant in the room.

If the case calls for it, try incorporating a meta-framework into the structure. You’ll be surprised by how much easier victory becomes.

Morality: What Makes the World Go Round?

by Ashlyn Olson

Morality—a word that our world sometimes seems to ignore, a concept that we attribute to our worldview, and a value that has been addressed in Lincoln-Douglas debate for years. But, instead of leaving the topic of morality as a simple, underlying principle, this year’s resolution demands that debaters discuss what morality actually means and what defines a moral obligation. At least in my experience, it can sometimes be hard to argue morality. If you are arguing for it, you must have a very clear definition of what exactly you mean by “morality.” If you argue against it, you run the risk of appearing as though you are abandoning a Christian, Biblical worldview. In this article, I hope to give you some understanding of how to argue for and against morality this year’s resolution.

**Definition**

One of the hardest parts of this year’s debate will be defining the term “moral obligation”. This will also be one of the most important parts of your case, since this will help to create a clear debate, and will make it easier for the judge to understand your position. When I debated, I always used definitions that I felt would be fair for both sides. So, as the affirmative especially, make sure you find a fair and clear definition that will allow appropriate ground for both sides.

You also must decide whether to define moral obligation as one term, or as two separate terms. If you choose to define “moral” and “obligation” separately, please make sure that the definition still works if you put the two definitions together. If you tried to define “English muffin” as two different terms and mashed the definitions together, it would have an entirely different result than defining the term as a phrase. A good definition I found of “moral obligation” is from the law dictionary section of The Free Dictionary: “A duty which one owes, and which he ought to perform, but which he is not legally bound to fulfill.”[[1]](#footnote-1) By no means do you need to use this particular definition. But, for the purposes of this article, this is the general premise of what I will be referring to when I talk about moral obligation.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy further breaks down the concept of morality. “The term ‘morality’ can be used either: 1) descriptively to refer to some codes of conduct put forward by a society…2) normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons.”[[2]](#footnote-2) This is where things get tricky. Morality as defined by society can vary depending on religion, culture, and geographical location. Similarly, morality in a normative sense is easy for us as a generally homeschool, Christian community to define, but is difficult to pin down when faced with differing worldviews.

**Arguing against Morality without compromising your Morals**

Whenever you argue morality (whether for it, or “against” it), remember that you are debating your brothers and sisters in Christ. As with all debate topics, you must argue respectfully and dialogue with your opponent cordially.

It has become a trend among debaters to ignore arguments they don’t feel comfortable disagreeing with (abortion or morality, for example). While I would NEVER want you to say something in a debate round that you personally disagree with, I would encourage you to think outside of the box and realize that there are ways to handle difficult arguments without directly contradicting your opponent and your worldview. There are a couple of ways to do this. First, you can probe in cross-examination to see exactly what your opponent is arguing. Second, you can detach your opponent’s application or specific analysis from how it relates to the resolution. Third, you can mitigate the impact. Do you have a stronger example? Bring it up instead.

When probing in cross-examination, be careful with morality issues. You do not want to appear to the judge like you are arguing against your worldview. You also do not want to force your opponent to bring the debate back to God or the Bible, which will be harder for you to argue against without alienating the judge. Below is a line of questioning that you could ask (or your opponent may ask) and possible responses that you can say if asked (or your opponent may use):

-Where does morality come from?

Naturally, we might answer God and the Bible, and that would be true. But, sometimes answering that way can put our opponents in an awkward position. Novice debaters especially might think they have to contradict everything that you say. So, if possible, you may want to try an alternative answer that is equally true. If your opponent continues to press you, you can then respectfully answer that morality comes from God and the Bible.

Another way you can respond to this question is by referencing man’s inherent conscience, or the theory of natural law (or both). Specifically, John Locke believes in a form of moral code that forms natural law and gives people the inherent belief that certain actions such as murder are wrong. Locke explains in “Of Ethic in General,” “Without showing a law that commands or forbids [people], moral goodness will be but an empty sound, and those actions which the schools here call virtues or vices may by the same authority be called by contrary names in another country; and if there be nothing more than their decisions and determinations in the case, they will be still nevertheless indifferent as to any man’s practice, which will by such kind of determinations be under no obligation to observe them.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Ultimately, of course, our conscience’s perception of morality should be rooted in God and was given to us by God, but that may be a secondary answer to bring up only if you are pressed.

-Who determines moral obligation?

This is largely dependent on your definition. Some definitions may specify this, but you still should be prepared to answer this question. Both our conscience, natural law, and human rights concerns can provoke moral obligation. Because of the scope of the resolution, government will likely be the one determining moral obligation.

-Are there punishments for not fulfilling a moral obligation?

On a personal level, yes, we will ultimately be held accountable for our wrongdoings.

On a governmental/national level, there may be repercussions, but they are often hard to link back to a particular action.

-What does moral obligation entail?

Again, this will largely depend on your definition. It will also depend on *who* has the moral obligation. A government will have a different obligation than an individual will. From the affirmative standpoint, mitigating international conflicts will definitely be involved in moral obligation. From the negative standpoint, a government’s moral obligation will likely be taking care of their own country, or whatever direction you choose to take your negative case.

Each of these answers should be tailored to your particular case, but start thinking through the answers to some of these questions.

**Common Arguments against Morality** (subjective, vague)

As the negative, you may end up agreeing that some sort of moral obligation exists for each country, government, or people group. You do not have to ignore the concept of morality. Instead, think about reasons why there may be higher moral obligations than mitigating international conflicts or why mitigating international conflicts does not specifically fit under the definition of moral obligation.

If you do choose to specifically address morality at its head, consider how morality might be subjective and vague. I would like to note that I believe in absolute truth. I believe that there is a clear, Biblical standard of morality. However, I also believe that *perceptions* of morality differ. Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world and people believe in a lot of different, false religions. Their concept of morality may be false, but if we were debating from the perspective of a different worldview in a different country, we might argue that standard of morality just as passionately. So, while I encourage you to acknowledge that there is a true standard of morality, I also think you can argue that morality as a philosophical concept interpreted differently by people all over the world is subjective. For example, I read an article that talked about six people in Iran who were found innocent of murder by the Iranian Supreme Court. Technically, the court believed that the six people committed the murders, but they were “innocent” because those people who were the victims of the murder were deemed “morally corrupt.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In addition to being subjective, morality as a debate value can also be vague. Because of its relative nature, morality is hard to pin down. What is right and wrong, if it is not dependent on culture and we are not going to link it back to God? Your opponent may not have all the answers regarding morality, so you could make a case that morality is vague and therefore we cannot know exactly what we are debating.

**Common Arguments for Morality**

One of the strongest arguments in favor of morality is absolute truth. Especially in the community we are debating with and in front of, people will generally agree that there is an absolute truth that defines morality and moral obligation, even if it is not always respected and is sometimes misinterpreted. When arguing for morality and specifically moral obligation, the key is going to be defining your terms properly. If you can specify what morality *should* mean, you will be able to counter any arguments regarding ambiguity and relativity. On their website, the ministry Focus on the Family explains, “If we have ultimate truth, it gives us both a way to explain the world around us and a basis for making decisions. Without it, we’re alone. We’re just 6 billion organisms running around, bumping into each other with nothing unifying to work for or believe in. It’s every man for himself. And we’re without a purpose; if there’s no true story of where we came from and why we’re here, then there’s nothing that really gives our lives meaning.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Arguably, moral obligation arises out of absolute truth, which is the reason why an action becomes an *obligation*. The difficult part is going to be linking mitigating international conflicts to this high-level of morality.

**Conclusion**

We have an exciting year of debate ahead of us. But, before diving into the topic, it is paramount to have a basic understanding of the various facets of morality, and what it means to be morally obligated to do something. When preparing for tournaments, you may also want to think through some the common arguments for and against morality so that you will have a leg up in the competitive season. Most importantly, exploring the issues of morality will hopefully further strengthen your Christian worldview!

Whatever THAT Means! *Exploring the Different Connotations of “International Conflicts” and their Implications to the Resolution*

by Benjamin Griffith

**Definitions, definitions, definitions.** Everybody hates debating definitions. This is understandable. However, definitions are fundamental for good debate. Before you even begin to construct your constructive, you should have a strong understanding of all the terms. Your definitions will shape your case philosophies. Don’t dread the process of exploring the possible connotations of the United States, moral obligation, mitigation, and international conflicts. Spend some time finding strong, credible, defendable definitions that will allow you to enjoy quality debates with quality clash. Cool beans? Cool beans.

Let’s talk about international conflicts. **Whatever THAT means**! Because no one really actually knows what international conflicts is supposed to refer to. In actuality, it could mean a great deal of things. “International conflicts” is the direct object of the resolution. Its meaning will shape the focus of your overarching argumentation. It will affect the way you define the United States, mitigation, and moral obligation. It will also influence your selection of supporting applications. Depending on the definition of this term, we will see debates this year on the Rwandan genocide, Iran’s radical opposition to Israel, North Korea’s extremely threatening hostility to the world, the continuing turmoil in the Sudanese regions, trade disagreements between country *x* and country *y*, and maybe even worldwide struggles against catastrophic cancers and devastating diseases.

International conflicts might refer to **ongoing disagreements or hostilities between two (or more) different nations** (basically when two nations have a specific problem with each other and it doesn’t necessarily involve the United States at all, but it’s an international conflict nonetheless). This is probably the most obvious interpretation and will likely prove to be the most common in debate rounds. An example of this sort of international conflict would be the seemingly unsolvable tension between Israel and Iran. Iran has declared the intention of wiping Israel off the map. Israel isn’t thrilled about the idea. Does the United States, as an ally to Israel, have a *moral* obligation to mitigate this international conflict?

You might choose to define an international conflict as any **‘open conflict’** established by a nation or organization that is **not necessarily directed at a specific country**, but still causes tension and unrest internationally. Some terrorist groups have no explicit nationality or declared allegiance to any country. They may be opposed to Christianity or non-radical Muslims, but not necessarily specifically against country *x* or country *y.* What about piracy? Piracy is still a thing in 2013 (if you say that out loud it almost rhymes!). It is especially an issue in African regions near countries such as the Ivory Coast and Somalia. These terrorist groups and pirates would be considered menaces to the general international community but do not necessarily represent a nation vs. nation international conflict. So, does the United States have a moral obligation to mitigate an international conflict between a French oil tanker and the Davy Jones of the Ivory Coast, or is it simply none of our business?

And then there’s **“inter-intra-national conflicts**:**”** conflicts within a single nation other than the United States. These conflicts might affect regions surrounding the country and would therefore be considered international. The revolutions in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Jordan, and Bahrain are all examples of singular nation international conflicts. Any sort of civil war within a single country would also apply to this definition. If you choose to use this resolutional interpretation, you might argue about the United States’ moral obligation to mitigate the Rwandan genocide or the Sudanese civil war. As the negative debater, if you hit an “inter-intra-national conflict” interpretation case, it might be wise to challenge the affirmative’s topicality (or resolutionality if you refuse to use Team Policy terminology and would rather use a word that didn’t even make the English dictionary). Remind the judge that you’re debating about *inter*national conflicts. If the conflict does not involve two or more nations, it may be a non-topical and, therefore, irrelevant application. Affirmatives, be ready to respond to that response!

With any of the three resolutional interpretations I just mentioned, you might define the United States as the United States Federal Government, the United States as a general member of the United Nations or NATO, or as a veto-member of the UN Security Council. Moral obligation could be defined through the lens of US, UN, or NATO binding documents and constitutions. You will also want to research the principles surrounding hegemony, just war theory, and diplomatic alliances.

Maybe you’ll choose an **economic resolutional interpretation.** An economic resolutional interpretation would address the United States’ moral obligation (or lack thereof) to mitigate economic crises or trade disagreements involving multiple nations. Could the United States possibly be responsible for contributing to a solution in the Eurozone crisis? Because of the interconnectivity of businesses worldwide, the Eurozone crisis can easily affect companies in the United States. What about an agricultural trade conflict between Peru and Guatemala? As a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), or in light of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs, eg. NAFTA) with surrounding countries, the United States may have more obligations to mitigate such conflicts than one would perceive on first glance. Affirmative debaters, your challenge with this resolutional interpretation will be to show the correlation between such international conflicts and the *morality* aspect of the United States’ obligations to mitigate them.

Finally, you might consider running a case that contends that the United States has a moral obligation to mitigate **“common conflicts”** in the international community. A conflict doesn’t necessarily have to be a clash between two nations or two groups of people. A conflict could be a struggle against an issue or problem that creates an obstacle to achieving a value. There are numerous common conflicts that transcend national boundaries: cancer, AIDS, malaria, poverty, pollution, world hunger, etc. Do the citizens of the United States in the private sector have moral obligations to contribute to a unified mitigation of such conflicts, or would they be justified in a state of apathy and indifference? While less intuitive, the common world conflicts interpretation has potential for some very exciting debates.

Every term in this resolution is crucial. These interpretations of “international conflicts” allow for high levels of creativity, unique argumentation and case structure, and enjoyable, intellectual clash. I hope you will explore all five of these interpretations and maybe even develop your own analysis! Regardless of which path you choose, you’re in for a wonderful year of Lincoln-Douglas debate competition. Get excited!

\*\*\*\*\*

Here are a few basic sample definitions to supplement each of the five resolutional interpretations I mentioned in this article. When you research definitions, you will probably notice that there are very few real definitions for the term, “international conflicts.” Because of this, you may have to create a combined definition using definitions of “international” and “conflicts” to develop an accurate explanation of your interpretation of the resolution.

**Nation vs. Nation Conflicts, Group vs. International Community Conflicts, and Internal International Conflicts**

United States – “The executive and legislative and judicial branches of the federal government of the United States”[[6]](#footnote-6)

United States\* – “North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean; achieved independence in 1776”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Moral Obligation – “The duty, promise, or requirement imposed by the moral law upon a free moral agent; the constraining power of conscience or law; a cord that binds one to another. Moral obligation is that course of action which conscience reveals to a moral agent to be right and proper, i.e. loving, in a given situation. Man is obligated by his reason, intellect and moral faculties to always act in accordance with those faculties.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Moral Obligation – “an obligation arising out of considerations of right and wrong”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Mitigate – “to lessen in force or intensity, as wrath, grief, harshness, or pain; moderate.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Nation vs. Nation Conflicts**

International Conflicts – “Conflicts between two or more nations”[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Group vs. International Community Conflicts**

International Conflicts – controversies pertaining to two or more nations or their citizens[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Internal International Conflicts**

International Conflicts – controversies or quarrels involving two or more nations or nationalities[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Economic International Conflicts**

United States – “Includes any district, authority, office, bureau, commission, department, and any other agency of the United States of America.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

United States\* – “North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean; achieved independence in 1776”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Moral Obligation – “an obligation arising out of considerations of right and wrong”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Mitigate – “to make less severe”[[17]](#footnote-17)

International Conflicts – a struggle or controversy involving two or more nations[[18]](#footnote-18)

**Common International Conflicts**

United States – “The executive and legislative and judicial branches of the federal government of the United States”[[19]](#footnote-19)

United States\*\* – The citizens within the “North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean; achieved independence in 1776”[[20]](#footnote-20)

Moral Obligation – an obligation “founded on the fundamental principles of right conduct rather than on legalities, enactment, or custom”[[21]](#footnote-21)

Mitigate – “to make less severe”[[22]](#footnote-22)

International Conflicts\*\*\* – fights, battles, or struggles (especially prolonged struggles) that transcend national boundaries or viewpoints.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**Notes on a few definitions**

*\*This second definition of “United States” provides a more literal interpretation of the term. Simply defining the United States as the North American republic containing 50 states allows you to analyze the United States as a member country of international organizations (diplomatic or economic) such as the UN, NATO, or the WTO. With such association, you can effectively demonstrate the United States’* ***obligation*** *to mitigate international conflicts.*

*\*\*By indicating that you are referring to the citizens within the United States, you set up the boundaries for an affirmative philosophy that contends that the United States and the citizens within (as doctors, scientists, engineers, etc.) have a moral obligation to contribute to the unified global attempt to mitigate conflicts that transcend national boundaries and that pose struggles for humanity worldwide.*

*\*\*\*Notice that this combined definition of international conflicts doesn’t necessarily imply a direct clash or opposition between two countries. Rather, it defines international conflicts as struggles that transcend national boundaries. This allows you to support a case for mitigating conflicts that are common to multiple nations such as disease and poverty.*

Unwashable Technicalities: *Dealing with Value Clash, Moral Obligation, and Definitions*

by Elizabeth Jacobs

I will be 100% honest, when I started Lincoln Douglas, after years of Team Policy, I was aghast at what LDers did. I kept thinking, “*Ok you guys, values are great and all, but how are you spending this much time discussing how Human Rights and Safety clash? Really? Just look at the facts.”* Of course, I warmed up to the wonderfulness of LD, and all those seemingly silly value arguments finally made sense. Still, advanced debaters are not the debaters who can refute every argument with six responses. The great debaters are the debaters who know when to attack and when to concede. This year, values will be pivotal; moral obligation will become extremely confusing; definitions will be abused like crazy. The point of this article is to know how to deal with these problems without getting consumed by the complexities. Realize this is coming from a debater whose first solution to an annoying argument was, “Just wash it!” (Editor’s note: “Washing” is debate jargon for responding to an argument in such a way that while your opponent can’t win the argument, neither can you. It “washes” the argument out of the round.)

**1) Value Clash:** I was never the LDer to worry too much about values. Applications are a blast, and that is where I dedicated my research and energy. This resolution, however, allows for very value centric cases. So, value debaters get ready to have a blast, but application debaters are going to need to take down threatening values.

Value centric cases can be wonderfully run with this resolution. You can tell if a case is value centric by looking at the structure. For example, if your opponent has three value links, they are most likely running a value centric case. More specifically, if you notice that the impact of their applications is their value, they are value centric. For example, if their value is US Sovereignty, their applications don’t have to prove millions of people are dying, they just have to prove that US Sovereignty is at risk. The damage to the value is the impact. These cases focus the round completely on the awesomeness of their value.

That being said, how do you deal with values in this resolution? Since most cases will hinge their whole advocacy on their value, you have to be able to take down or accept their value efficiently. Furthermore, if they win the value they can take down your applications in a few seconds. The best solution is always to accept their value. If you run a negative case tailored to fit with the general philosophy of common affirmatives, accept their value then steal the impact. Affirmatives won’t know what hit them. For example, human rights will most likely be a common value, so if you can accept human rights and prove that the negative side of the resolution upholds the wonderfulness of human rights, you stole the impact and can add extra impact of your own.

The second thing you can do is to take down their value. If you have a lovely, unbeatable value, be prepared to take their value down. After that, they have no impact to their applications and you get to spend the rest of the round impacting your value. It will be great.

**2) Moral Obligation:** For former Team Policy debaters it will be very tempting to write affirmative cases that simply prove that mitigating international conflicts is a good idea. That would be a logically tenable position if it weren’t for the term “moral obligation.” There are plenty of things in this world that are good ideas, but very few some things we *must do.* Understanding where to draw the line in this resolution is very important.

A moral obligation is something someone must do. Not doing it would be evil. For example it would be a moral obligation to not kill another human being. Not following that basic part of the human conscience would be evil. For that reason many moral obligations are codified in laws. Laws are meant to enforce and uphold the moral obligations we all know exist. That is why the average American citizen is perfectly ready to uphold the laws in our justice system. All of this philosophy goes a lot deeper and you can look at other articles to explore what a moral obligation is, but the point of this article is dealing with gigantic issues effectively.

In reality, an entire Lincoln Douglas round could be spent discussing the foundations and meaning of moral obligations. That’s pretty intimidating if you are a first or second year debater. Fear not, you don’t need to know years of philosophy to deal with this aspect of the resolution. Negatives need to press the Affirmative to show a clear moral obligation. The affirmative could point to many scenarios where intervening in a conflict worked wonderfully. As the negative, you don’t even have to be worried about the technicalities of their definition if they haven’t an established a moral obligation. All you have to say is, “Yeah judge, this example is great. The affirmative still needs to prove that every time there is an international conflict we *have* to get involved. Not getting involved would be the most repulsive action we could take.” If they can’t come back from that, their support falls.

Now affirmatives, what do you do with this trick principle. The best solution is to deal with it up front. Write a case that does in fact prove the resolution. Squirrely cases are always fun, but they have a short lifespan. Identify a value that establishes a moral obligation then tie that value to your case. If your value is Human Life, prove that not intervening in international conflicts lets human life be destroyed. You win your value, you prove a moral obligation, and there you go.

**3) Definitions Debacles:** When I started looking up definitions for this resolution I had one question, “Is there such a thing as a good definition of mitigate?” After losing hope in all my favorite dictionaries, I think the answer is no. The word mitigate is generally defined as “To reduce harmful effects.” That could mean just about anything. Our government could “mitigate” a war by sending an encouraging email to a military general. That is obviously an exasperated example, but you can see how definitions can get tricky. If mitigating is simply making something less terrible, and there is no measurement by how much, affirmatives can really abuse what mitigating is.

I thought after I handled the whole “mitigate” issue I would be fine. Unfortunately, “international conflict” presents more problems. Affirmatives will want to define international conflict as wars, genocides, and massive human rights tragedies. Negatives on the other hand, will want to define conflict as, “an angry disagreement.” You can clearly see abuse in both definitions. Affirmatives can point fingers saying, “Look at this massive war, we have a huge obligation to intervene.” Negatives can merely come back and say, “No, look at my definition, we can’t get involved in little squabbles.”

Put those two tricky terms together in one resolution and you are set for a lovely definitions debate that makes you, your opponent, and the judge want to be in a Team Policy round. So how do you avoid the painful death of a definition debate? There is a simple solution: don’t use abusive definitions.

Define mitigate reasonably, don’t make international conflicts so narrow you are the only one debating. Good cases can work with any definitions. If you are negative, allow for a definition that is just genocides and wars, then kill their case. If the case is completely hinged on the abusive definitions, point it out. One of the best responses you can give is, “common man.” Explain to the judge what the common man thinks when he hears the definition. The judge will identify with this because when he heard “international conflict” he didn’t think petty arguments between countries. Point that out, kill it, and move on with your wonderful arguments against the fun stuff.

Ok, there is an application debater’s take on all the unwashable technicalities you get to deal with this year. I hope this helped, and have an absolute blast debating this year.

Isolation Sensation

by Zachary Leoni

No treatise on international conflicts would be complete if it did not thoroughly examine the history, politics, and impacts wars occurring in 3rd world countries fueled by religious or cultural hatred. A word of warning before I continue though; a sad trend I sometimes see in homeschool debate is to refer to 3rd world countries, especially predominantly Muslim ones in a way that condemns the nation’s inhabitants as backwards and depraved instead of juxtaposing the nation’s politics, which are often ran by a few powerful individuals, and the nation’s inhabitants who often want nothing to do with the radical ideologies of the ruling class.

There are radical Muslims out there. 9/11, honor killings, violence against Christian minorities in Egypt, and nationwide implementations of Sharia Law are proof of that. But before we write off the entire nation, let’s step back and take a look at what we really know.

* We know that there are radical Muslim groups that kill innocent civilians out of pure hatred. We also know that Christian groups like the Crusaders massacred peaceful Muslim villages in the Middle East during the 1300s.
* We know that radical elements of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have tortured Christians in Mosques when they refused to convert Islam. We also know that Catholic Priests in the 1500’s viciously tortured and mutilated those who didn’t conform to their exact view of Christianity through Europe.
* We know that radical Muslims have called for the genocide of various groups such as Jews. We also know that Spanish Conquistadors in the 1500s massacred millions of South American natives through intentional exposure to the Smallpox virus.
* We know that radical Muslims have imprisoned minorities and held them for years without due process. We also know that in the 1940’s that America, a predominantly Christian nation, imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans for years without ever placing them on trial.
* We know that unspeakably evil acts of ethnic cleansing have occurred in the name of Allah. We also know that in retribution for the 2,000 year old crime of killing Jesus, over 6.5 million people were murdered in Nazi concentration camps.
* We know that passages in the Koran call for the stoning of those who blaspheme the name of Allah. We also know that passages in the Bible call for the stoning of those who blaspheme the name of Yahweh.

Don’t get me wrong, I think that aspects of Islam are morally repugnant and show far too little regard for the sanctity of human life. My point though is that Islam isn’t the only culture/religion that has made a lot of mistakes. There are millions of Muslims and Christians alike who abhor violence, lead upright lives, raise good kids, and are productive members of society.

The problem is that all cultures have radical members and/ or factions. We are currently seeing a high concentration of those factions in certain geographical locations. That is not a slight to people of brown skin, it is a scientific observation showing that in the status quo the demon of wanton violence has reared his gnarled head on a certain continent. If you run applications, or cases that speak about Africa you need to be very careful to differentiate between radical factions, and the average person who just wants to live, love, and prosper in peace.

In our discussions this year we need to be sure to show the human side of the average inhabitant of those countries and show why the policies we advocate in our case aren’t just protecting American and Israeli interests, but are also bring stability and human rights to the common man. Remember, your judges may be well informed on 3rd world politics, they may even be from one of those countries or have ancestors who were. Don’t alienate the judge because of his ethnicity; explain why you are there to help him and/or the nation he came from.

The phenomenon of phrasing cases offensively in STOA is nothing new. In my first year of debate, I had an opponent whose entire case was based off of condemning Lawrence v. Texas, a Supreme Court decision overruling state laws criminalizing homosexuality. I am a Christian, and I believe that homosexuality is condemned throughout the Bible as a deeply immoral lifestyle. However, my opponent was running a case that said we needed to reverse the decision and apply the death penalty for anyone who could be proven to be gay. What my opponent failed to realize was our judge was gay! To the judge’s credit he was very kind and gracious on the ballot, but he informed my opponent in no uncertain terms that he could not bring himself to vote for his own death.

I’m not asking you to make a truce with sin, I’m asking you to see that the average person in a foreign country isn’t a radical, they are fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers who want the best for themselves and their country, but are held down by poverty, oppression, fear, and a lack of education directly linked to the poverty they were born into. You can condemn the oppression of people without condemning the people themselves, and that’s what we have to do.

With that said I’d like to move onto the topic of wars occurring in 3rd world nations. Ironically, although I’ve been talking about mainly Muslim nations, the second most deadly conflict currently ongoing is actually only a few hundred miles south of my home in Southern California. Nearly 20,000 people were killed in Mexico last year (2012).[[24]](#footnote-24) In the aftermath of the December 2012 shooting in Newtown Connecticut that killed 26 people[[25]](#footnote-25) Americans were outraged and demanded results. There are disagreements on how to go about doing so, but every American agrees that such tragedies are unacceptable. Sadly in Mexico killings of several dozen individuals occur on a regular basis.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The most deadly war currently being fought is the Syrian Civil War which has cost nearly 100,000 lives.[[27]](#footnote-27) Sadly, according to some estimates, 90% of the dead were non-combatants.[[28]](#footnote-28) I.E. civilians who were not actively participating in the conflict. The Syrian civil war isn’t just killing soldiers; it is killing children and peaceful individuals who abhor violence.

At this point in the article you’re probably wondering how all this links into a value debate. If you needed advantages, disadvantages, and solvency cards for intervening in various nations you could just talk to someone who competed in Team Policy last year. However, you don’t read plan texts in value debate, you talk about broad ideas. You don’t advocate a specific policy; you argue that we have the duty to help people when we can.

One of the biggest debates this year will come down to whether or not we should pursue “isolationism.” Isolationism basically just means minding your own business and ignoring the needs of anyone who doesn’t live in your own country. Such policies were supported by Founding Fathers George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Today it is supported by Ron Paul and pretty much nobody else. This is partially due to a legitimate understanding of the changing world we live in, and partially due to the Paternalist ideologies currently espoused by many leaders who erroneously believe that we can right all the world’s wrongs while only making things worse.

Virtually every affirmative case will rest on two arguments. The first is that we have a duty to help suffering people in foreign countries. The second is that in the name of national security we must keep conflicts from escalating. Virtually every negative advocacy will rest on two unique arguments. The first is that America only makes things worse: Korea, Vietnam, etc. The second is that we have no duty to help out other people. They will argue that point on both a philosophical and financial level.

Moral arguments can and will be made on both sides. I encourage you to really examine the advantages and disadvantages of Isolationism. I’ll give you a bit of a head start by listing off a few advantages and disadvantages of each. The list will by no means exhaustive, but it should cover the major arguments.

The two major advantages of Isolationism is that it: saves money, and makes fewer enemies.

The first advantage is based off of the fact that if we aren’t spending money conducting operations and giving aid to people outside the United States we’ll still have that money. This gives us the ability to help out American citizens who are struggling with poverty, a bad economy, high crime rates, a broken education system, and a social security system that members of my generation will pay into, but never receive payments from.

The second advantage is based off of the fact that if we “let sleeping dogs lie” they are less likely to bite us. In practice this means that if we stop intervening in religious and tribal disagreements in other countries and picking sides in every conflict known to the good Lord we will have less people who want to kill us. If we stop killing innocent civilians by propping up bloodthirsty dictators and funding Osama Bin Laden like we did in the 1990’s people will keep their nonsense in their countries instead of projecting it into ours. The empirical solvency for this policy is found in the nation of Switzerland who has stayed out of foreign conflicts for the last millennium and has less than coincidentally been virtually free of foreign assaults for the same period of time.

The two major disadvantages of Isolationism is that it turns a blind eye to the unspeakable oppression of other people and compromises our own national security.

In the late 1990’s the Rwandan genocide occurred where 1 million innocent men, women, and children were killed. The international community, the U.S. in particular, refused to call the situation a genocide and instead referred to the massacres as “acts of genocide.” They did this to minimize the perceptual impact of the deaths and justify our choice to do nothing to help the people being killed. Due to the complacent attitude of the international community during a 100 day period, roughly 10,000 people a day were hacked and beaten to death by Hutu militias.

By choosing to be isolationist we inevitably compromise our own national security by degrading the effectiveness of our intelligence community, allow wars to escalate to global threat, and allowing our enemies to gain more advanced and devastating weaponry. One of the major applications that will be used against isolationism is Iran. By not directly intervening in Iran we are allowing a radical nation to gain access to devastatingly powerful weapons. If Iran gets those weapons it will create a nuclear arms race in the Middle East like the one that happened in Europe in Asia after the Second World War. Due to the innate instabilities of the Middle East, nuclearization of the region will drastically increase the chances of thermonuclear war, the long lasting effects of which could take generations to solve.

This is where the debate gets really interesting. The smart affirmatives will inevitably argue that rejecting isolationism will improve our national security by allowing for force projection and hegemony establishment overseas. Smart negatives will argue that those actions only provoke our enemies and create the perception of American militaristic aggression in the international community harming our international image as peace makers. That compromises our ability to act as an intermediary between international belligerents increasing the probability of a major war which risks thermonuclear annihilation.

The politics of wars are inherently muddled; especially wars that occur in nations whose politics are dominated by religious and tribal considerations. But before you let the affirmative get away with framing the resolution as: “save lives, or don’t save lives.” get into the debate about whether or not we will even save those lives.

In conclusion I’d like you to remember two things. Firstly, you should discuss all applications, but especially those in regards to people of the Muslim faith with delicacy. I’m not telling you not to confront the evils of Jihadism or Sharia Law. In fact, I encourage you to condemn those acts for the simple reason that they destroy the lives of moderate Muslims who are simply trying to exist in peace. Secondarily, don’t make the debate harder than it needs to be. Consolidate the debate into a discussion of Isolationism good, versus Isolationism bad. Basically turn it into a Kritik debate without explicitly calling it that.

If you have any questions on how to incorporate any of this feel free to email me at n00bdebater@gmail.com

Over The Hedge: The Implications of U.S. Hegemony

by Michael Tcheau

I was sitting in my office one day, when I saw a line of ants running around my desk. Annoyed at their presence, I followed their trail until I saw the little hole in the wall from whence they came. For the next few hours, I tried to ignore them. However, when they started crawling onto my desk, I knew something had to be done. I went to Home Depot and bought “queen ant killer.” I carefully placed the queen killer poison near the trail before going home for the night. When I came back to work in the morning, a strange sight greeted my eyes. The ants by my desk were still there, but they weren’t in a line anymore. They were scurrying out of control, running with no sense of direction and bumping into each other. Some of them were even fighting, and others had already been killed. In the midst of their presence an ant at least three times the length of a normal ant lay dead. I could only assume that the queen ant killer had done its work. Curious, I left them alone. By the time I left the office, every single ant was dead; they had killed each other off. The survivors had already fled back to the wall. Now, I’m not sure if this behavior is normal of every ant colony, but this is an illustration of a very important philosophy of life: *While there is a clear leader, society has the ability to function orderly.*

When the queen was alive, the ants were perfectly organized and worked diligently. They may have had inner conflict or some logistical problems, but they were more or less a perfectly functional unit. When their leader was killed, a power vacuum was created. Without anyone to keep them in order, their colony degraded into chaos and death. This is true of the world as well. While there is one, or several, nation(s) with dominance and power working in general harmony, the world functions fairly smoothly without severe conflict. The key is that there has to be a clear leader. Without this leader, the international community disintegrates into civil wars, genocide, and economic collapse. This philosophical principle is referred to as “*Hegemony*” (or simply “hege” pronounced “hedge” for short).

As I normally do in most of my articles to this publication, I will write an author’s disclaimer. The purpose of this article is not to persuade you, the reader, to think in a different way. It is not to change your political bias, or sway you to believe about the world in a way that you have not before. If this does happen, it is a consequence of how you react to the information. I do not know if you are a republican, libertarian, democrat, communist, anarchist, or fascist. In all truth, it should not matter. The purpose of this article is to provide you with facts that you can use in a debate round or your own case: to provide you with ammunition or defense for you to use in an academic setting of competition. Because this is my intention, I will try my best to provide you with:

1. Accurate facts that reflect the true course of events supported by credible citations and statistics.
2. A balanced approach to each application and argument with affirmative and negative positions for and against each point.
3. A greater knowledge and understanding of international policy and world events.

Lastly, I want you to know that this article is only as useful as you want it to be. If you skim over the content without trying to understand the graphs or the information, you will find yourself confused and probably unhappy with the article. But if you take the time to study the graphs and read the information, this article will give you evidence that can win you rounds and solidify your case. I encourage you to take your time reading, analyzing, and understanding the following content. Consider photocopying the article and bringing it into rounds. Some of these evidence, quotes, and arguments might just be the difference between a win and a loss.

We’re going to start by looking at some important terms that require understanding and definition. We will then look to the topic of hegemony itself and examine both positive and non-positive arguments against this idea. Lastly, we will look at military and economic applications that show you the impacts of hegemony. At the end of the day, it’s your choice to decide when and how to use these applications, and if you believe that hegemony is a necessary good, or an unnecessary evil. Ready? Set? Go!

**Definitions of important terms:**

*Hegemony*: The social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group. (Usually one nation or a group of nations)[[29]](#footnote-29). *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary*

*Hard Power*: The ability to achieve influence, or one’s goals by the use of force, especially military[[30]](#footnote-30). *Collins English Dictionary*

*Soft Power*: The ability to achieve influence, or one’s goals without the use of hard force, especially by persuasion or diplomacy[[31]](#footnote-31). *Collins English Dictionary*

*Trade Sanction*: An economic coercive measure adopted usually by several nations in concert for forcing a nation violating international law to desist or yield to adjudication[[32]](#footnote-32). *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary*

*GDP*: Gross Domestic Product. The monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period, though GDP is usually calculated on an annual basis. The equation to calculate GDP is C + G + I + nX = GDP. Where C is consumer spending, G is government spending, I is investments, and nX is net exports (total exports minus total imports)[[33]](#footnote-33). *Investopedia/(operational)*

*Genocide*: The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group[[34]](#footnote-34). *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary*

*Mitigate:* To make less severe. To cause to become less harsh[[35]](#footnote-35). *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary*

*International Conflict:* A struggle (often military) between two nations, or within a nation outside of the US.[[36]](#footnote-36) *Cambridge Dictionary*

*Obligation*: The constraining power of a promise, contract, law, or sense of duty[[37]](#footnote-37). *American Heritage Dictionary*

*Power Vacuum:* A state of chaos that occurs when a dominant source of authority is removed. Society fights each other to fill the suddenly empty role of a leader[[38]](#footnote-38). *Operationally Defined*

**On the Topic of Hegemony**

While the dictionary definition provided a brief overview of the term “hegemony,” let me explain it with a little more context. The word “hegemony” comes from the 1560’s Greek word “hegemonia,” which is literally translated as “leading the way: going first.” Hegemony is the idea that if there is one power nation keeping most other nations in check, then the international community can continue in harmony and success. When this “hegemon” is removed from power, the international community crumbles into a power vacuum. The ensuing conflict causes warfare, bloodshed, and economic collapse.

**Tying the Resolution to Hegemony (Correct LD Theory)**

Stoa’s 2013/2014 LD reads verbatim, “Resolved: The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflict.” There are two important things to note about the resolution:

**1. The resolutional actor is limited to only the United States**

Because the resolution specifies the US as the one who has the moral obligation, debate rounds will center on what level of involvement the U.S. (Not China, Canada, or the U.K.) should have in the mitigation of armed or political conflict in the international community. The affirmative must argue that the US should be actively involved in attempting to easy the severity of clash or turmoil in different nations. This implies that the US is to be the hegemon, or at least a hegemon, of the world. The affirmative advocacy must prove that US hege is a beneficial and necessary factor to the survival and wellbeing of the world. Conversely, the negative must counter the affirmative advocacy by proving that US hegemony is either:

a. Non-existent, or impossible to truly have.

b. Does not benefit the US, and therefore we do not have a mitigatory moral obligations.

c. A negative influence in the world that nations would do well without.

*\*Author’s hint: “c” will be the most persuasive and frequently run response to the affirmative advocacy of hegemony.\**

Proving either of the above three arguments to the judge will result in a negative victory. If the affirmative can successfully convince the judge that the negative’s responses to the hegemony advocacy are flawed and untrue, the affirmative debater wins the ballot.

**2. “Moral Obligation” is a sneaky qualifier.**

A large part of the debate will center on what the true meaning of moral obligation is. This is where the value comes into play. Both sides of the resolution will use their value to qualify what the moral obligation is. For instance, affirmative may run the value of “Sanctity of life” as the qualifier for a moral obligation. If sanctity of life is being harmed, then we have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflict. If not, then the US need not have a moral obligation to be involved. Both sides of the resolution must attempt to show why their qualifier for moral obligation is the superior measuring standard. The winner of this clash decides the standard for “moral,” and will most likely win the round. Because of this, both sides need to do several strategic moves.

a. Hit the value hard. Breaking the opposing value means that you get to set the standard of the round.

b. Link your applications closely to your value. They are the bread and butter of your case. Applications in this resolution will be important and persuasive to the judge.

c. Use values and applications with heavy impact. Don’t just stop at “this action is unconstitutional” argue that “not only is this action/value unconstitutional, but it has led to the deaths of hundreds of people, failed to end the genocide, and caused an economic collapse.”

d. Consider running a “bulldog” case. A bulldog case is one with a narrow criterion and a broad value. The value acts as a bulldog that takes the brunt of your opponent’s arguments, while your criterion is the real link between your case and the resolution. An example of this would be a value of justice, and a criterion of international accountability or government transparency.

e. Run value links. Explain to the judge why your value matters, and why it is the best qualifier for “moral obligation.” A value link looks like this: Value Link 1: Justice is the highest moral obligation. For a further explanation of value links, read Travis Herche’s articles in previous installments.

As always, the value is the single most important part of your case. It is the thesis and pinnacle upon which your advocacy rests on. Defend yours with your life and attack your opponent’s with every gun you have. I would recommend the affirmative to run values that pertain best to hegemony and intervention, while the negative should run values that distances them from these principles.

**Arguments for Hegemony**

**1) Hegemony promotes economic prosperity and stability.**

One of the most commonly used arguments in support of hegemony, is that it provides for countries to grow their prosperity due to the relative stability of the region. The prolonged periods of peace allows for nations to focus on development and investments without the risk of conflict and war. While most of Europe and North America haven’t experienced many threats to the homeland in the past 70 - 80 years, war is a common occurrence in Africa, parts of South America, Eastern Europe, and remote parts of Asia. As a result many nations within these regions have weak economies, and are stricken with rampant poverty and violence. In order for economic growth to be created, stability and peace are necessary. In LD (and the everyday world), many people commonly use the term “prosperity” and “growth” without truly understanding what it means. Let me take a moment to help you understand and measure economic growth. The universal standard for measuring growth is through a term known as Gross Domestic Product (or GDP for short). GDP is calculated by adding spending with net exports and investment. Compare the following two charts. The first is of the UK, US and Euro Zone GDP from 2003 – 2011 (figure 1.1)[[39]](#footnote-39).

Note that at Segment A, GDP in all three sectors are on a rise. In Segment B, GDP has fallen sharply (due to the great recession). In the recovery period following Segment B, GDP is growing again; with the US growing faster than the Euro Zone which is almost flat from years 2010 through 2011 (recovery is a little more optimistic looking between 2012 and 2013).

This second chart is of Zimbabwe, a nation that experiences frequent wars. See if you can tell the difference between the first world economies (figure 1.1) and Zimbabwe (figure 1.2)[[40]](#footnote-40).

As you can see, the difference is evident in the fact that, while there was a recession in the US, UK, and Eurozone, the wars in Zimbabwe caused GDP to SHRINK ten percent in 1993, and continue that downward trend (gradient represented by the straight negative line) until 2005. Wars harm economic growth. We’ll look at why in the following section:

**Economic Leakage**

There are three major sources of economic leakage (factors that damage GDP and growth): taxes, non-liquid savings, and imports. For a nation like Zimbabwe, in order to finance the war, taxes are levied (wherever they can be). Weapons are bought from other nations, which increase imports. People panic and stop spending money causing non-liquid savings. The result is evident in figure 1.2: GDP shrinks, and an economy dies. Whenever a war is fought, especially by a smaller nation, GDP is greatly harmed. The amount of money that must be spent completely obliterates any income.

**Economies are Tied Together**

Part of the hegemony theory is that nations are bound to each other economically. If you noticed in figure 1.1, the GDP growth of the US, UK, and Euro Zone were fairly consistently. This is made even clearer in figure 1.3 below.

At line A, all the above nations experienced an economic peak. At line B, they had troughed out at the bottom of their GDP downtrend (except Greece who has only recently started to show signs that may resemble slight improvement). In a global economy, economic trends follow a similar pattern. The reason is because every nation is tied to another. For instance, the US and Chinese economies are tied together. Because the US is unable to fund their spending rate, they are forced to borrow money by selling bonds. China is the majority international shareholder of these bonds, and thus has the largest share in US debt. When the U.S. economy crashed, the interest rates on bonds fell. This meant that China gathered less interest from owning US debt. Financial downturn in the US results in less Chinese products being bought by Americans, the number one consumer of Chinese products. Because of this, economic decline in the US means that China loses many exports. The result is that the Chinese economy edges into a recession as well. The rest of the globe is tied together in a similar way to this. As Dr. Sasha Ceverak of the IMF said in 2012, “One of the most important things for all investors to remember is that the world is tightly tied together. Gone are the days when one country could, in isolation, remain immune to the effects of the global economy.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Stability is necessary to ensure economic security and financial prosperity. Hegemony is the stabilizing factor of the world.

**2) Hegemony provides military stability**

Hegemony is said to provide the best protection of human rights and ending violent conflict in smaller regions. This is fairly self-explanatory, and we’ll look closer at this in the following sections. For now, the logic is as follows: the nation that is the hegemon acts in order to preserve its own leadership role. This means that it has to be accepted in the eyes of the international community. The Hegemon acts to keep a clean image of themselves by associating their intervention with: protecting human rights, supporting dictatorship overthrows, promoting global security by ending terrorism, and taking actions that protect the global economy. In short the hegemon is acting in their own self-interest by helping other nations through protecting human rights or overthrowing a dictatorship. As Professor Bradley of the Defense Department and Strategic Studies of Missouri State University writes, “Maximizing the power of the United States aids its ability to defend itself from attacks and to advance its interests. This argument is based on its prodigious economic, ideological, and military power. Due to this power, the United States is able to defeat its enemies the world over, to reassure its allies, and to dissuade states from challenging it. From this power also comes respect and admiration, no matter how grudging it may be at times. These advantages keep the United States, its interests, and its allies secure, and it must strive to maintain its advantages in international politics as long as possible.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

**Positive Impacts of Hegemony**

These are the applications that the affirmative can run to show why the US, through their role as the global hegemon, has a duty to mitigate international conflict.

**Myanmar**

Perhaps one of the most successful examples of positive hegemony can be seen in the example of Myanmar. For the past two decades, Myanmar has been torn apart by a cruel dictatorship that crushed dissidents, and imprisoned political opponents. In 2011, the US passed a series of harsh and painful sanctions that froze funds to the Burmese Central Bank, and crippled Myanmar’s economy. This display of soft power was intended to have Myanmar’s government release political prisoners and begin democracy and liberalization. The sanctions worked. In 2012, Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar to chat with government officials and discuss the lifting of some sanctions. Not only did Myanmar release many political prisoners, but also began the road to a free nation. As the Economist reported in their May 25, 2013 edition, “Myanmar has undergone a remarkable transformation. Ruled by the generals, the country was a blank space. Now it is finding its place again at a nexus between China, the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia. Amidst the first democratic processes, and the beginning of a new constitution, Myanmar is an entirely different nation. The neighbours are pouring in with road- and port-building projects to reconnect Myanmar to its region. And now that they have lifted nearly all sanctions, Europeans and Americans are also excited, sizing up a country of 64m people that is rich in resources and market potential.”[[43]](#footnote-43) In figure 1.4[[44]](#footnote-44) we see that in segment A, the economy showed the potential to almost double its growth period in just two years (between 2008 and 2010). Had the hegemony of the US started working sooner, Myanmar would have thrived much quicker.

**Korean War**

The Korean War is a historically used example that strongly shows the benefits of hegemony. In 1950, communist infiltration into the Korean peninsula resulted in a split between South and North Korea. In an attempt to block the spread of communism from consuming the entire Korean peninsula, US forces under the order or President Truman launched a counteroffensive to protect South Korea. Three years of combat later, the US was finally successful in preventing the Northern communist forces from invading South Korea. A demilitarized zone was established along the 38th parallel, the line that divides North Korea from South Korea.

The impacts of this war are evident today. While North Korea remains a cold, dark bitter nation ruled by dictatorship and communism, South Korea has flourished. One of the world’s top electronics manufacturers, South Korea’s success can be directly attributed to the prevention of communism, as well as the spread of capitalism. According to Princeton University, “South Korea has a market economy which ranks 15th in the world by nominal GDP and 12th by purchasing power parity (PPP), identifying it as one of the G-20 major economies. It is a high-income developed country, with an emerging economy, and is a member of OECD. South Korea is one of the Asian Tigers, and is the only developed country so far to have been included in the group of Next Eleven countries. South Korea had one of the world's fastest growing economies from the early 1960s to the late 1990s, and South Korea is still one of the fastest growing developed countries in the 2000s, along with Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, the other three members of Asian Tigers. South Koreans refer to this growth as the Miracle on the Han River. Having almost no natural resources and always suffering from overpopulation in its small territory, which deterred continued population growth and the formation of a large internal consumer market, South Korea adapted an export-oriented economic strategy to fuel its economy, and in 2009, South Korea was the eighth largest exporter and tenth largest importer in the world.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

**The Philippines**

In 2002, the US received intelligence from the Philippine government that terrorist cells with links to Al Qaeda were present in the Philippines. Among these terrorists was Abu Sayaff, an Al Qaeda leader with ties to Osama Bin Laden and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Upon receiving this intelligence, the US sent over 2,000 marines in order to help the Philippine armed forces to root out Sayaff and Al Qaeda. Though most of the soldiers did not see combat, they assisted with logistics and training purposes. The Philippine government claimed that the US was instrumental in the removal of Al Qaueda from the Philippines. According to the Associated Press, “The full complement of Americans is to train and advise Philippine forces in counterterrorism tactics to use against the extremist Abu Sayyaf group, which is holding U.S. missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipino nurse Deborah Yap hostage on southern Basilan island. U.S. military officials have stressed that Afghanistan isn't the only country where Americans are fighting or plan to fight terrorists. Overt and covert military operations are “going on in a great many places'' to “do away with ... pockets of terrorism,'' the Afghanistan war's commander, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, said last month. He gave no details. The U.S. advance team has been in the Philippines for weeks, officials said. Warplanes and other equipment are to be provided in an expansion of a longtime U.S. counterterrorism program in that former American commonwealth. They were approved in a November agreement between Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and President Bush.” We all know that the Philippine government has been very seriously attempting to deal with terrorists on one or two islands,'' Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Thursday.” They have some hostages that have been taken over time, some of whom have been killed, some of whom, I believe, may have been released. But some are still held, including some Americans,'' Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news conference.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

**Non-Positive impacts**

**Beirut**

In 1982, in order to attempt to quell tensions caused by the displacement caused by the Israeli-Arab wars, the US deployed marines to Lebanon in order to mitigate the negative effects of the war. This included supplying the Lebanese government with resources they needed in order to help quell riots and fight insurgency. Unfortunately, the soldiers were unable to do much against the violent uprising. A second deployment of over 1,800 marines was sent to try and quell the soon-to-be civil war. However, without the proper instructions or objectives, instead of being able to bolster the failing Lebanese government, the US marines just became entangled in the civil war. This resulted in an unnecessary loss of life. According to PBS, “On October 23, 1983, a truck bomb exploded at the vulnerable marine headquarters, killing 241 marines -- the largest loss of life in a military operation since Vietnam. For the military, Beirut becomes a symbol of ill-considered political objectives and poorly-defined rules of engagement.”[[47]](#footnote-47) This is an example how foreign policy failed to solve any problems while digging graves for American lives.

**Colombia**

Since the 1990’s the US has provided the South American nation of Colombia with billions of dollars of foreign aid. The purpose of this was to provide the Colombian government with the monetary assistance it required to fight the drug war. While the plan seemed to work on face value, a closer examination of the facts reveals that even worse atrocities have been committed by the use of the American funds. The Colombian government is far from just. The Colombian Commission of Jurists writes that “The Colombian military has been credibly accused of murdering 329 civilians in cold blood in 2007 - a 48% increase from the 223 reported in 2006. This brings to 997 the total of civilians murdered by the Colombian military since President Uribe, the U.S.'s top regional ally, took office in the spring of 2002. No other country in the Hemisphere even comes close to this horrendous record of state-sponsored violence.”[[48]](#footnote-48) The attempt to mitigate the conflict between Colombia, and neighboring nations that harbor drug lords, has given a despotic state the ability to hire more soldiers that kill civilians. The result is that the war on drugs continues to rage, while innocent people are killed by the government.

**Bahia de Cochinos**

Or “Bay of Pigs” (because I like to tell myself I can “hablar espanol”). The Bay of Pigs invasion is one of the most well-known failures of US intervention. In an attempt to stem the tide of Communism in Cuba, President Dwight Eisenhower gave orders for CIA forces to conduct a secret mission into Cuba (while President Kennedy affirmed the action). The mission objectives were to kill Cuban Prime Minister, Fidel Castro, in order to enable democracy in Cuba to prevent communism. The idea was that a secret task force would land on the Bay of Pigs and work with revolutionary militia to overthrow and eventually capture or kill Castro. The only problem was that Castro knew exactly what was going to happen. When CIA forces landed, they were met by overwhelming resistance. Under heavy machine-gun fire and air attacks, the US forces surrendered. Of the 1,500 US soldiers that took place in the invasion, 118 were killed and 1,202 were captured. The Bay of Pigs has come to be used in textbooks as the classic “failed invasion attempt.” This single event marred Kennedy’s otherwise successful presidency.

**Conclusion**

If you’ve reached this part, I commend you on taking the time to look through some valuable information. I hope that I’ve been able to show you a little bit about the events of this world and how they relate to hegemony and the resolution. Whether or not the concept of hegemony has made the world a better place is up to you to decide. For now, knowing these ideas and principles should be enough for you to come up with some solid arguments for and against hege. It’s your turn to use this information to your advantage. Who knows, maybe you’ll have some hegemony of your own over the league.

Whose Morality Justifies Mitigation

by Aaron Dykstra

“Whose morality justifies mitigation?”

When posed with the question, “does the United States have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts?” the first question that must come to the forefront of our minds is “Whose morality justifies mitigation?” More simply put, what set of morals guides the actions of the United States government when dealing with international conflicts. Are they the morals of the United States? Are they the morals of one of the countries involved in the conflict? Maybe both countries involved in the conflict? Can a country even have morals?

I would like to break up this article by addressing some of these questions, showing support for each viewpoint, and then showing how the premise you choose truly affects the debate round.

**Question 1**: Can a government have morals?

Benjamin Franklin once said that "Laws without morals are in vain." By this we can understand that governments operate with a set of morals. Governments, as a force in and of themselves, cannot have morals, just like a company or corporation cannot have morals. A government can operate with a set of morals, however, when we realize that governments are simply citizens organized into ruling offices over other citizens, as placed there by democratic (by the people) elections (at least here in the United States). So therefore, to answer the question, “can a government have morals?” we must know that a government, being made up of individuals, can operate with a set of morals derived from the people.

*Impact in an LD round:* Governments operate with a set of morals, making moral obligations possible for a government.

**Question 2**: Do the morals of the United States justify mitigation?

If the conflicts of the world are viewed through the premise that the United States should mitigate conflicts, we are left with a couple of side effects. First, the United States will impose its Judeo-Christian ethics and morals onto a situation where mitigation seems fitting. Secondly, the country in conflict may disapprove of the intrusive action of the United States. Not only might countries respond to mitigation negatively because they will lose state sovereignty, they might also reject the morals of the United States and retaliate. If the morals of the United States are imposed onto other nations’ conflicts, then the mitigation may not be viewed as valid from all the parties involved.

*Impact on an LD round:* The round will be limited to the examples that break the moral code of the US only, not of any other nation.

**Question 3**: Do the morals of one nation in the conflict justify mitigation?

This question obviously begs the secondary question, “By which nation’s morals should mitigation be justified?” If a country lines up more closely with the morals of the United States, does the United States side with them, or maybe the United States could just throw its own morals by the wayside and support the nation that has a better chance of winning with the least amount of cost. No matter how you look at it, there is no way to justify a mitigation that doesn’t draw on the morals of the United States, as the actor in the resolution.

*Impact in an LD round:* If any examples base the justification for mitigation on the morals of one nation, the debaters must ask themselves why would the US side with one nation or the other? It really all does tie back to the moral code of the US.

**Question 4**: Do the morals of both nations in conflict justify mitigation?

Many times international conflicts occur because either territorial boundaries are being altered by a nation or the two nations are clashing in their moral codes. What should the United States do when it is faced with problem of incorporating both nations’ morals into a justification for mitigation? There will never be a perfect example of countries both agreeing to let another nation come in and mitigate a conflict, like a parent dealing with two small children fighting over a toy. There is always more to an international conflict.

*Impact in an LD round:* Examples and theory behind the moral code of the US is thrown out the window, and the moral code of the nations in conflict take precedent. There can be no perfect example, however, of two nations agreeing to let a third party “parent” their discord.

**Question 5**: If the United States is willing to impose its moral code onto international conflicts, is it willing to have another country do the same to them?

If the United States were engaged in an international conflict, would US leaders want another nation to impose its morals onto the conflict that the US was involved in? The leaders of America would never agree to this, or allow this to happen because the US would lose all state sovereignty.

From these five questions, I think we can see that the only moral code that can be used to justify mitigation of an international conflict is that of the United States. Therefore, if conflicts do not interfere with the moral code of the United States, they should have no mitigation from the US whatsoever.

There are 3 options in how to interpret the moral obligation of the United States. First, we must remember that the United States should impose its morals onto an international conflict instead of using the morals of the country/countries involved. The morals of the United States are manifested in the founding documents of America, as well as in the laws of the US. However, under the moral code that has been codified in the US, life is an inalienable right, yet abortion is legal. This makes the moral code of the United States relative to the laws that are in place at the time of a specific example.

With that said, we should closely examine the three options in viewing the United States’s moral obligation, or to whom/what is the moral obligation towards.

**1)** The United States has a moral obligation to its citizens.

The idea that the United States has a moral obligation to its own citizens has a couple of inherent flaws. First off, “international conflicts,” when properly defined, should be seen as conflicts between two different countries, of which the US is not included. The wording of the resolution implies that the US is not currently involved in the international conflict, which backs the idea that the US is not one of the countries engaged in the conflict. Secondly, because of the fact that the US cannot logically be one of the countries in the conflict, the debater supporting this position must link the international conflict to the American people. Just saying that a threat can harm others worldwide does not mean that the aforementioned threat will become imminent to the American people. Simply linking international conflict to economic harms, leading to a worsening economy and worse living conditions for Americans is also far too weak a link to justify a mitigation of that international conflict.

**2)** The United States has a moral obligation to its own moral code.

This stance makes sense at first glance. Why not have the US abide by its own moral code, and therefore let its moral code guide the actions of the government. The only real problem with this in and of itself is that we don’t really know what the moral code of the US is. People disagree constantly over morals here in the US. One need look no further than the issues of abortion and same-sex marraige to see how there is not unity of the American people when it comes to a moral code. The only way to understand what the moral code of the US consists of is to examine the codified morals of America by looking at the laws of the US. This leads to the third option.

**3)** The United States has a moral obligation to its own morals, as codified in American law.

This option ties in the best of both previous options. It looks to both the moral code written into the law of the US and the opinion of the people. By looking to codified moral code, the US government can clearly see what it is basing its actions on. Whenever there is an international conflict that violates American *codified* moral code, the US has the moral obligation to its own codified moral code to mitigate the conflict and therefore the violation of its moral code. The problem with this view is that it turns America into the cosmic cop, which attempts to police the entire world according to its own laws. Most countries will not simply step aside and let the US impose its moral code onto the situation at hand.

The third option is naturally lurking behind any international intervention by the US. Look to any time the US intervened in any international conflict, and you will find the US defending its own codified law.

Whenever the US involves itself in any international conflict, we clearly see the US operating on the basis of its own moral code manifested in law. Consider the conflict in Syria, where multiple countries have become involved in what began as a civil war inside the country of Syria. The US has intervened on the side of the rebels in Syria because Assad’s regime has violated the codified moral code of the United States. The United States has seen this violation of the “red line,” a figurative line put in place to measure the use of chemical weapons, as a valid reason to mitigate the conflict in Syria. All of this was/is based on the United States’ codified moral code.

The morality of a person guides what that person does, just like the moral code of a government is the guide for governmental action. The actor of the resolution is, of course, the United States. Therefore, it only makes sense to focus on the actor’s morals rather than the countries or situations being acted upon. However, there are some flaws in viewing the US as answerable to itself when it comes to justification for mitigation. Because America's moral code is relative, meaning that it can change with new laws, there is no stopping the US from becoming the antithesis of its founding Judeo-Christian value system. In the future, the US has the potential to become the most powerful nation in the world with the ability to destroy the ideas of God given rights and the sanctity of human life.

In making sense of the morality of this resolution, we must have an agreed upon standard of morality for the US government to abide by. The only way we can provide a standard for US action is by looking to US codified moral code in the laws of America. The problem with this view is that the codified moral code of the US can change, making the standard relative. Any standard of measurable moral code will be relative, because humans are fickle. In theory, the US could become the biggest international power against the idea of God-given rights. If the US were to then impose its moral code onto international conflicts, it would go even further to destroy the idea of God-given rights by mitigating conflicts in supporting the country that lined up more closely with its moral code. As of right now, the US comes closest to the morals of Christians because of America's religious freedoms. This may not be the case in the future, but the US will still need a moral code off of which to base action, and that basis must remain the codified moral code of the US.

As you debate this resolution and deal with the issues of moral codes and moral obligation, I encourage you to never stop exploring new ideas, new analysis, and new ways to explain your position to the judge. Morality arguments can make a debate round very hard for a judge to listen to, so make sure that you punctuate your debate rounds with energy and wit. Be diligent in your studies on this resolution and never forget to give God all the glory, in the successes and the shortcomings.

Banana Growers and Heroes:   
A Primer to the Resolution

by Jesse Byrnes

Generally, homeschool value debaters walk into the early years of their forensic careers with a grandiose view of the United States (especially its foreign policy, which they view as relatively supreme), a tenacity for moral argumentation (of which their belief system is chiefly supreme), and a desire for conflict (for which debate is always supreme).

Fortunately, this resolution has all of the above.

**Resolved: The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.**

First, understand what this resolution is not. It is not an opportunity to elevate a narrow and myopic definition of morality or generalize one for an entire nation and government of which it does not generally apply. This resolution is not necessarily a barometer for current international conflicts in which the U.S. does or should have an interest, but rather a judgment on the validity of American involvement as a whole.

The resolution doesn’t specify the type of international conflicts (political, economic, cultural, social, religious, scientific, environmental, etc.), who must be involved (free nations, the U.S., allies, enemies, etc.) or the level to which the U.S. must be involved (dipping in our toe, knee-deep or up to our eyeballs).

So, what does the resolution include and what is it all about?

**1. The “United States” is a collection of 50 states in the Western Hemisphere with a relatively homogeneous society interested in freedom, diversity, and rule of law, and a heterogeneous collection of religions, social trends, subcultural groups, and political slants. (Also, it has local, state, and federal governments.)**

Maybe it’s the dream of one day entering law school and becoming a famous politician or simply the pocket-sized Constitution stuffed in their black, power-suit trousers, but homeschool debaters love to argue politics. Consequently, everything is viewed politically – topics about corn production soon look to Monsanto and the latest farm bill plowing through Congress; changes in air quality shift to debates over environmental regulation; Capt. Crunch starts making red, white, and blue cereal. Cultural, social, economic, and religious perspectives – to name a few – are at best less popular and at worst completely ignored. Viewing the subject in the resolution as the U.S. federal government not only severely undermines debaters’ abilities to think outside the box but leaves their argumentation sounding like monolithic triads.

There are a variety of Team U.S.A. players that can have a hand in mitigating international conflicts, from local charities and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to international ambassadors and policymakers. Depending on the type and severity of the conflict, a combination of a few may be necessary: If it involves human trafficking, then perhaps International Justice Mission can work with the local government to solve the problem; if it’s a rivalry between two groups of banana growers in Latin America, perhaps a single Spanish-speaking grocer can do the trick.

First, consider the type of conflict. If a debater is looking at sectarian violence in the Middle East, it’s likely to be between the two main Islamic sects, the Sunnis and Shiites – a growing conflict[[49]](#footnote-49) that requires a comprehensive Middle East strategy. But to establish a strategy, one must have a basic historical context for sectarian clashes, which brings together geopolitics, religion, and culture. (And most times a “sectarian clash” is newspeak for “a group of men just shot up a car, dragged the driver out onto the gravely road and beheaded him before dumping the decapitated body into a ditch.” Of course, this should be handled differently than a rivalry between banana growers.)

Second, consider an appropriate response and determine those who should be involved in carrying out that action. (Are differences between Sunnis and Shiites reconcilable? Who does it affect? Should both sides come to an understanding when non-Muslims are caught in the crossfire? What would that look like? Who would need to forge that agreement? Who would enforce that agreement? etc.) If considering a specific application like Syria, past the United Nations and Arab League, one might argue for U.S. involvement with drones for intelligence and the American Red Cross for relief.

**2. Since the resolution is Western-centric, it’s vital to view “moral obligation” from a decidedly Western perspective.**

For example, Iran and other Muslim countries would likely have a very distinct “moral obligation” than the U.S., Britain or Canada on any given issue. Similarly, it’s nearly impossible to contend that one nation has a moral duty to do something if that duty is completely foreign to them. (Why doesn’t democracy “stick” when transplanted abroad? Why is child labor and human trafficking still viewed as acceptable in many Asian societies?)

Note that resolutions are typically generated from a Western perspective. (“Should America do this? Can the U.S. do that?”) As others are sure to point out, this resolution parallels many of the ideas offered in the NCFCA’s 2006-2007 resolution “Democracy is overvalued by the United States government” and the following year’s “That the United States of America ought to more highly value isolationism,” both lending heavily to ideas of American supremacy, democracy building and viewing the U.S. as the world’s police.

So, what kind of moral obligation does the U.S. have? Most would contend that it would fall under founding principles like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or – more broadly applied – modern-day human rights. Some will contend that government is (or should be) amoral, common in debates concerning same-sex marriage or abortion. However, in the context of mitigating international conflict, “moral obligation” might be better viewed as “human obligation,” since many of the conflicts involve parties of entirely separate belief systems. Still, can an amoral government have a moral obligation? When it comes to protecting basic human rights – which are written into the founding documents of the nation – absolutely.

But oftentimes the very thing intended to be protected gets trampled in the process, making many question the intent. This exists in all wars and most conflicts, where one pines after freedom or democracy but maintains a casualty count along the way. Is our goal still human rights? Sure. Are we violating the human rights of some to get there? Definitely. Is it justified? Arguably.

When people are oppressed, the natural response is to fight against that oppression. When there is conflict, we want to alleviate that tension and advocate for peace. In places like Syria, where a cluster of sectarian, regional, and international interests clash, the solution is less clear. Should it be mitigated? Yes – but how? And are we the best to do it? After Afghanistan and definitely after Iraq, the American people are treading more lightly on the path to immediate U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts. Sure, people are dying and nations are crumbling, but we’ve got mounting debt to worry about and a lot of people are still jobless. Unless we’re sure we can do well by most parties involved and actually help alleviate part of the problem, we don’t want to be involved. And when there are so many unknown factors, it’s hard to prove any type of obligation, especially one of morality.

**3. The U.S. doesn’t need to be the hero of all international conflicts, it just needs to do some partially-heroic stuff.**

Throwing America into a “moral obligation” and “international conflict” debate is sophomoric at best and merciless at least. The bright side for debaters rests with the active “mitigate,” which by no standards means “solve” nor “ignore.”

A quick search in the Google reveals that “mitigate” means “to lessen” or “to make less severe.”[[50]](#footnote-50) From a policy perspective, this means any action, no matter how seemingly insignificant, that lessens international conflicts justifies the affirmative stance and supports the concept of moral obligation (i.e., if it’s in our power to do something, we should do it). From a value perspective, this means nothing.

For value debate, the resolution is constructed not to allow debaters to provide illustrations where the U.S. played a mediocre role as an international mediator to lessen some conflict, but rather to contend and prove that America has a moral obligation to perform the action of mitigation itself, albeit marginally. Debaters don’t have to prove that the U.S. has a moral obligation to solve international conflicts, but that we have a moral obligation to lessen those conflicts – that we have a moral obligation at all.

Traditionally, debaters would argue that American involvement was either good or bad. Here, debaters argue over whether the U.S. has a moral obligation to be involved to a certain extent. Negatives may still opt to contend that America should not be involved at all, but at least here affirmatives can wedge their arguments in more narrow theoreticals.

Still, value debaters will easily find themselves entrenched in debates arguing over the significance of one action over another and the morality of intervening based on the level of effectiveness. This is hardly the point. Ideally, if the U.S. can lessen some international conflict, it has a moral obligation to do so. If we can, then we should. Forget about the policy issues and start worrying about the moral implications.

**Conclusion**

Much of this year’s debate will come down to a central question: Is America special? Those that would rightfully argue to the West’s respect for individual rights, rule of law and freedom of opportunity will consider the validity of any sense of moral obligation for mitigating international conflicts to be uniquely American (few other nations have the same comprehensive view of liberty and economic success and the wherewithal to mediate conflict). On the other hand, while tremendously successful, both economically and culturally, and forged by founders well-versed in the classical education afforded them by Greek and Roman history, America has no international charter to protect freedom in foreign places, spread democracy abroad, or resolve international conflicts. This, combined with the ambiguity of amoral and multi-moral tendencies, our government is not uniquely positioned to advance a certain mitigating strategy. Still, many will contend, it has a moral obligation to try: human rights require it.

**Food for thought**

Do other countries have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts? If the Affirmative says yes they’re extra topical; if they say no they’re benevolently ethnocentric.

In many ways, this resolution is not asking if we should be involved, but rather if we should be involved in the discussion of whether or not we should be involved.

On a broad spectrum of involvement and relative effectiveness, should ignorance be part of America’s international armory?

How do we know if we can actually mitigate conflicts? And what value do we use to weigh which conflicts garner our involvement?

Winning the Moral Debate

by Joshua Tey

I want to briefly address one of the fundamental issues in debate – competitiveness, winning, and the desire for success. Since this year’s resolution revolves a great deal around morality and ethical choices, I find it only appropriate to discuss what it means to be a successful, ethical debater. Even as competitors across the country attempt to compose a compelling moral case to win rounds, the utmost importance lies in the need to dwell on winning the moral debate within ourselves – a debate over how we measure our success, and how we define ourselves.

Before we dive in, I want you to know that I’ve assumed two things about you – first, that you’re a Christian, and second, that you want success. If you haven’t been saved, then you need to read a far more important text than this before you continue. If you are a Christian, but don’t desire success and greatness, then you need to change your mindset. It’s interesting that Jesus never discouragesthe pursuit of excellence and greatness. When the disciples quarrel over the query “Who is the greatest,” their Master never rebukes them by discouraging the question and declaring that they should not wish to be great. Rather, he *affirms* the importance of the desire to be great, then redefines greatness and commands them to pursue that ideal.[[51]](#footnote-51) As Christians, we are *called* to pursue greatness in a Christ-like manner

Assuming, then, that you are a Christian person who desires success, I’ve want to ask two questions that have driven and guided me during my time as a debater – but I believe they apply to the rest of life as well.

First, how do we debate? Do we argue with winning as the governing motivation? Or do we participate with moral integrity at the forefront, even at the cost of our own success? In debate, Lincoln Douglas included, this demonstrates itself most often in the arena of evidence and historic applications. Time and time again, I have seen debaters – top-tier included – respond to some historical example that they’re not knowledgeable on by making something up, twisting the example out of context, or implying a meaning that doesn’t exist. Unfortunately, they often win such rounds and advance to later rounds. Recently, I was discussing this subject with another debater, and he said something to the effect of, “Debate is all about how you come across to the judge, so you just have to be confident in what you say.”

But there are two reasons that fabricating with confidence is not acceptable. First, history is a record of God’s work on the earth, and when we tamper with it, we’re sullying holy ground. Second, Scripture says very clearly that “Out of the heart the mouth speaks.” Countering an argument with a false claim or a half-truth is not merely a harmless exercise of confidence. It’s a message to yourself that winning over the judge is worth sacrificing moral integrity. Doing so doing so decays our hearts. As Jesus says in Mark 8, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"[[52]](#footnote-52) We must ask ourselves the question: Is winning worth so much that we will stoop to strain our moral fiber and integrity before God? So if you do find yourself constantly running into “irrefutable applications,” either do more research, or else don’t refute the application. Even if you do lose one or two rounds, they soon become irrelevant, but the chinks in your moral armor won’t.

The second question is this. How do we measure our ultimate success? In contrast to integrity and evidence standards, there really is no barometer for adjudging your motivation, other than your own heart. That’s why it’s essential to ask the fundamental question. There are a couple ways to gauge success. First, you can determine whether you’re successful by using your record, speaks, trophies, and feedback from the judges. This sort of standard certainly seems the simplest and method to determine success – in debate terms, it’s quantifiable and measurable. However, doing so poses significant problems – first, you become a performance-driven debater, and more importantly a performance-driven *person*, where your worth and success is defined by the critics around you. This also poses a distraction to the more important issue of who you are as a person. If you’re driven by your own glory and the desire to impress others, then you give others great power to control you – power that should only belong to One. Thus, we should hold our successes lightly.

In contrast, being motivated by God's glory means that we are motivated primarily by God and knowing that our ultimate success is measured by whether we have pleased Him or not. Such a measure is no longer dependent on the vagaries of men's opinions or tournament results. It can be measured by the enduring standards of our transformation towards Christlikeness. Then, the power to determine your success becomes wrapped up in a one singular Objective and Constant. While there is only one champion at the end of the season by human standards, anyone who finishes the season as a person of character and uprightness before God is a champion. This sort of attitude has incredible ramifications. I have seen twelve year old rookies end the season with nary a checkmark, and yet they are among the most joyful of people, always bearing a smile and encouraging everyone. So too, I have witnessed seasoned veterans who find themselves eliminated by foul play lift up compassionate and grateful prayers.

Thus, I suggest that you determine your success as a debater by how you stand before God. Whether you win or lose, go 6-0 or 0-6, you are a successful debater and *person* if you debate with integrity and uphold the highest level of character. The judges around you may deliver helpful feedback, but they are poor indicators at best of your true success. It matters not *how* you do; only *who* you are.

Certainly, It’s a difficult request because the affirmation of man is so *present,* and everything else seems distance and far off. Tournaments celebrate physical success immediately, and the rush of immediately adulation is intoxicating. Perhaps I can put it this way, though. The exercise of debate is not the ends. It is simply the means. It is only one small destination on a long road towards a destination; one small ingredient in the recipe for true success. There’s one more question we need to ask. When we finally reach the journey’s end, or should I say the journey’s *beginning*, what will define us? Will it be the trivial memento – the trophies, achievements, and successes – that we encountered along the way? Or will we find our definition in someone who will offer us the crown of life and usher us in, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Therein lays the answer to the moral debate. I strongly urge an affirmative ballot.

Obligatory Obligations: The Crucial Role that the Word “Obligation” Plays in the Resolution

by Nick Harrington

Of all the key words in this resolution, the word obligation by far the most important. It is absolutely crucial because it determines the respective positions of each side and the ground that you and your opponent have. How it is *interpreted*, not defined but interpreted, should be the defining factor in the round. The word “obligation” can be interpreted in two different ways, it can be interpreted in a *strong* way or in a *weak* way. Here’s the difference:

A *weak obligation* is something that you SHOULD do, but can sometimes violate for a greater duty or moral reason. So for example, honesty is a weak obligation, it’s a good thing to uphold, but it can be violated if it conflicts with a greater moral duty like saving lives. So if someone is helping Jews escape from a concentration camp, it’s perfectly fine to let the moral code of honesty take a back seat to the moral code of saving lives. So taking obligation in the weak sense means *you should fulfill your obligation but it is okay to not do so if you are upholding a higher obligation.*

A *strong obligation* is something that you HAVE to do. Always. No exceptions. So protecting innocent lives for example is a strong obligation, it should always be done. The only time innocent lives may be taken is if it protects more innocent lives in the end. Bottom line though, innocent lives are still the highest goal and can *never* be placed beneath another goal. Strong obligations do not conflict with each other and they are binding, *you only have one morally correct option and that’s to fulfill your obligation. Period.*

Here’s why the distinction matters: If the word “obligation” is taken in the weak sense, then the affirmative should definitely win. Because then all the resolution is saying is that it is good to mitigate international conflicts. But if doing so conflicts with a higher moral duty (like protecting our troops or obeying our constitution or whatever else) then we do NOT have to mitigate international conflicts. So if the neg brings up a time when we should not have intervened, or Americans were killed or whatever else, the aff can just say, “I’m not saying that mitigating conflicts is our HIGHEST obligation there are many things that are more important, all I’m saying is that it’s something that we should do when we can.” So all the aff needs to support is that there are *some* times when we should intervene. Good luck neg, because now the only ground you have is to say that we should *never* try to help another country. Have fun Mr. Heartless.

Whereas if the word obligation is taken in the strong sense then the neg should win hands down. If it’s taken in the strong sense, then we ALWAYS need to fulfill our obligation. So the resolution is saying that no matter what, when, where or why, our sacred duty is to mitigate international conflicts. If there's a conflict somewhere in the world, then there is only one moral thing to do, and that’s to step in and try to help. So if the aff brings up a super awesome example of where we intervened and saved lives, the neg can just say, “Sweet, sounds fun, but the aff position is not to show that in a couple of extreme times it was good to help people, that’s obvious, the aff’s position is to show that we are morally BOUND to mitigate conflicts, if there's a conflict, we have go in and try to make things better, and that’s simply not true because of… (insert heart wrenching application of intervention gone wrong here)” So have fun aff, the only ground you have is to show that the US is morally bound to mitigate every single conflict. Ever.

The cool thing is that both interpretations are perfectly reasonable. It sounds fine to say that we have a moral obligation to tell the truth yet we shouldn’t always do so, and it also sounds fine to say that an obligation is binding and can never be broken.

Now be careful, I simply made up the terms “weak obligation” and “strong obligation” to help explain my point, they are not real terms. In reality, the word “obligation” must either be one or the other. It’s like how in some years “freedom” could be taken as being limited or unlimited, it’s the same thing here, “obligation” can be taken as *always* binding or just *sometimes* binding. So don’t use the terms strong or weak obligation in the round, just logically show the judge why your interpretation (whether that be always binding or sometimes binding) is logically superior to your opponent’s.

Here’s how you could support either interpretation in a round.

Weak Obligation: This is used on aff, so in your case briefly outline what an obligation is and interpret it in the weak way that I’ve been mentioning. If your opponent ignores that point, you’re all set. If they argue against it, use the following:

1) Give lots of examples; they’re great communication tools. Use examples of things (like telling the truth) that your judge will most likely agree are obligatory, yet are not the highest good. So you could bring up traffic laws and say that while you are obligated to follow them, if doing so is dangerous, (like if you need to evade a drunk driver, or if there’s a natural disaster etc.) then you should not follow them because safety is a higher priority.

2) If your opponent tries to pull the “strong obligation” card on you, then argue that while morality is absolute, there are no moral rules that apply to absolutely every single situation. Argue that there are no unbreakable moral rules (outside of using the Bible) and that depending on the situation some things should be prioritized over others. Yes protecting innocent lives is incredibly good and almost never should be broken, but in the Civil War justice, freedom, and equality were placed above life. That was morally right given the situation. Whatever example of a “true” obligation your opponent gives, find a time when it, morally speaking, should be broken. The reason why that matters is that if the word obligation means “an unbreakable moral boundary” and your opponent cannot give an example of one, then your opponent’s interpretation is not real world, it’s a fantasy. That’s a great reason to prefer your interpretation over your opponent’s.

Strong Obligation:

1) To support the idea of a strong obligation on the neg, you may get lucky and the aff will define obligation with the word “must” or “have to” in the definition, however even if they don’t, you should not *redefine* the aff’s definition, just *reinterpret* it. Explain how the nature of the word obligation means that you have no choice, that you must fulfill it. The only way the word has any value is if it objectively cannot be broken. If an obligation is something that can be morally violated by any individual because they arbitrarily think that they have a good reason to do so, then the word makes no sense.

Bring up what other dictionaries say about obligation, not to redefine, but to clarify, because most dictionaries say that obligations are binding. If they’re binding then they cannot be broken, even if you think you have a good reason for doing so.

2) Bring up the legal sense of the word obligated. When you sign a contract we say that you are obligated to fulfill it. It’s not optional. You must legally do what you said you would do. Here obligation is binding. Moral obligations are even more so. With a legal contract, you choose to sign it whereas a moral contract or a moral obligation exists simply because you are human. The mere fact that you are a person means that you are bound to a certain code of morality. The resolution is claiming that part of that morally binding code or contract is the notion that the US must mitigate international conflicts. If this is true, then we are bound completely. We can’t morally violate our obligation. We must always mitigate international conflicts with the same consistency with which we must protect innocent lives. Using that argument you’ll be able to bring the whole obligation issue back to your side, prove that obligation should be taken in the strong sense, and then, all you have to do is show that we should not *always* try to mitigate conflicts.

A word of caution: Don’t tell you judges too much and don’t spend too much time on this issue. For example, when you go to Disneyland, the ride mechanics know all the ins and outs of how the rides work. They know what's really behind the fog in Pirates of the Caribbean and what the robot animals in Splash Mountain look like without fur. They need to know that to make everything go smoothly but you don’t. In fact, you shouldn’t. It will ruin the fun. You just need to sit back, and enjoy flying with Peter Pan or riding in Indiana Jones’ jeep, oblivious to what's *really* happening. It’s the same in the round, logically speaking, the framework you build using the word obligation is what wins you the round, but your judges won’t want to vote based upon framework they will want to vote based on values and applications. You need to know that the applications don’t define the round and that the word obligation is all that really matters, but your judges don’t. It’ll make the round as boring as Space Mountain with the lights on. Your judges just need to sit back, and be dazzled.

So *do not* tell your judge that you win simply because of your framework or you interpretation of “obligation”. Simply *use* your framework and *use* you interpretation of obligation to destroy your opponent’s case and to show why their applications don’t work. So it’s fine to continually fall back on what an obligation is, just present it in a “I’m bringing everything back to the resolution” way not in a “My sketchy interpretation wins me the round” way. *Do not* spend a lot of time proving your interpretation of obligation, yes logically if you win the framework and spend 30 seconds on everything else you *should* win; but you won’t because your judges will hate it. Simply be prepared to briefly and persuasively show why your interpretation is superior, and then spend the bulk of your time explaining the impact of that interpretation. So use your interpretation and bring up what obligation means to beat your opponent, but do that while addressing their value/application as opposed to spending all of you time off the flow and on what obligation means.

Also, you may feel that it’s cheap or unfair to framework your opponent almost out of the round and to give them such a hard to defend position, but that is not at all the case. To DEFINE your opponent out of the round is wrong, but to ARGUE them out of the round is perfectly legitimate, after all, that’s the whole point isn’t it? So if you make good sounds arguments based off of fair definitions as to why they must defend such a hard position, good for you. The challenge for your opponent is to either win with the little ground you’ve given them, or take the much wiser option of arguing against the framework that you’ve made. That elevates the debate above mere application wars to the point of actually understanding and unpacking what the resolution calls each person to support.

The meaning of word obligation is vital so use it to your advantage, study what it means, think about how it could be used and you’ll be much more prepared then your opponent in this very crucial area of the debate. Have fun. Focus on God. And debate not with the goal of getting a trophy but with the goal of making yourself and your opponent better thinkers and better communicators for Christ. After all, debate is just practice for life.

Methods of Mitigation

by Matthew Erickson

Definitional arguments are back. While STOA competitors may have been able to avoid major definitional debates all last year, the sheer number of words in this resolution makes that next to impossible. Even a different interpretation of the word mitigate can completely change the flavor of one’s case. While I certainly don’t recommend boiling every debate round into a definitional debate over the word “mitigate”, it is important to know what interpretations are out there, as well as the ways the United States mitigates conflicts when they arise. Doing so will not only give you a leg up over your opponents, it will also allow you to make your cases much, much more interesting.

**Definitions of Mitigate**

“To moderate (a quality or condition) in force or intensity; alleviate” [[53]](#footnote-53) (The American Heritage Dictionary)

“To make or become less severe or harsh; moderate”[[54]](#footnote-54) (Collins English Dictionary)

“To reduce the harmful effects of something” [[55]](#footnote-55) (Macmillan English Dictionary)

“To cause to become less harsh or hostile **:** mollify, to make less severe or painful”[[56]](#footnote-56) (Merriam-Webster)

“To make something less harmful, unpleasant, or bad”[[57]](#footnote-57) (Cambridge Dictionary)

“To make or become milder, less severe, less rigorous, or less painful; moderate”[[58]](#footnote-58) (Webster’s New World College Dictionary)

“To lessen in force or intensity, as wrath, grief, harshness, or pain; moderate. 2. to make less severe: to mitigate a punishment. 3. to make (a person, one's state of mind, disposition, etc.) milder or more gentle; mollify; appease.” [[59]](#footnote-59) (Dictionary.com)

**Interpretations**

As you probably noticed, all of the definitions are fairly similar. However, even if both debaters have the same definition, they may not have the same interpretation. Here are a few possible interpretations, though I warn you that there are probably many more.

1. “To mitigate means to contain”. When applied to international conflict, this interpretation is that governments are trying to reduce the number of countries affected, reduce the conflicts involved, etc. This interpretation lends itself most clearly to cases where direct action is used, such as military intervention.
2. “To mitigate means to reduce the negative impacts of something”. This is probably the most accurate interpretation. Instead of saying that the United States is reducing the area affected like the first interpretation, this has more to do with reducing the number of people killed, money lost, treaties broken, laws violated, etc. Unlike the next interpretation, this involved actually reducing the problem to something more manageable.
3. “To mitigate means to stop something from escalating”. When speaking about mitigating international conflicts, this is actually the most common in the real world. When there is a conflict internationally (whether that be over currency manipulation, a violation of international law, etc.), a pure solution is rarely possible. Instead, countries try to “mitigate” the conflict by stopping it from escalating and hoping it dies out over time.
4. “To mitigate means to withdraw from a conflict.” Squirrel alert! I threw this interpretation out there because I know somewhere in the United States is a Libertarian who balks at the idea of advocating international involvement as the affirmative (disclaimer: This is not meant to be offensive to Libertarians at all. My idealistic side actually really likes Ron Paul.) The logic runs something like this: every time the United States gets involved in an international conflict, we escalate it rather than mitigate it. Thus, to truly mitigate an international conflict, we need to simply withdraw. The biggest problem with this interpretation is that it is borderline topical at best. It involves severe manipulation of the definitions, logic, and your judge’s mind. The only way I would ever run this case is as a counter-pick against certain judges, where I only run it for alumni and some community judges. Alumni will love you, and community judges are already so confused that they may not notice how weird this case is. Parents and coaches will hate you if you run this case. Just so you know…

**Historical Examples**

Historically there have been many ways the United States has tried to mitigate international conflicts (other than remaining neutral). Some have been more effective than others, but they could all make interesting case ideas.

***Embargoes/ Economic Sanctions***

Using trade embargoes as a means of mitigating international conflicts is as old a trick as diplomacy itself. When countries find themselves in conflict with each other, the first step is usually to try to pressure the other country fiscally. Nothing speaks a government’s language more than a drop in GDP! Economic sanctions are just another version of an embargo, and often involve many countries at a time. For example, the economic sanctions the UN has placed on Iran involved many countries, including the United States. While economic sanctions don’t have as much coercive power as other options, they can be very useful in mitigating a conflict instead of escalating it by invasion.

***Foreign Aid***

One of the United States’ favorite means of mitigating conflict is by throwing money at the problem. In 2011 alone, the United States gave out $49.6 billion in foreign aid: $31.7 billion in economic assistance and $17.9 billion in military assistance.[[60]](#footnote-60)

While at first it may seem like military aid is the only type that applies to mitigating conflicts, that is not the case. The biggest chunk of economic assistance goes to Sub-Saharan Africa. This aid goes to many unstable countries. By helping these countries provide food, water, shelter, and occupation for their citizens, this aid helps mitigate the ongoing tensions inherent in countries that suffer from destitute poverty. People who aren’t starving are less likely to do things like join rebel militias and raid nearby towns and villages. One only need look at countries like the Congo or Rwanda to see how this violence can quickly spill over and become a conflict on an international level.

Military aid, while less in amount than economic assistance, is nonetheless a very popular form of foreign aid. Countries like Afghanistan, Israel, and Egypt all receive assistance. While this aid is not always effective in mitigating conflicts in the long term, in the short term at least it can be very helpful. For example, our military aid to Egypt was negotiated in tandem with the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt as a part of the peace process. By guaranteeing this aid to Egypt AND Israel, we were able to assure both nations’ sense of security.

***Diplomacy***

While every example thus far is a form of diplomacy technically, what I mean by this term is the creation and enforcement of treaties, international laws, etc. Sometimes the United States does this through an international organization like the UN, sometimes with the support of an ally country, or even unilaterally. Often nothing more than having a big talk with the representatives from the other country is enough to calm down a situation. These types of talks happen all the time. For example, the United States has engaged in diplomatic talks between North and South Korea to try to mitigate the conflict over things like disputed islands and international waters. For the most part, we have been successful.

***Military Presence***

Sometimes all that is necessary to mitigate an international conflict is the threat of escalating it. Military presence is one of the best ways of doing this. Continuing with the example of the international conflicts over the Korean peninsula, the United States has kept a constant military presence in South Korea since the Korean War. One of the biggest mitigating factors in all of international conflicts in Asia is the threat that American troops will get involved. While there have been several near misses, many have argued that the only reason North Korea hasn’t tried to invade South Korea again is because of South Korea’s alliance with the United States.

Military presence can sometimes be perceptual rather than actual. Take Israel for an example. The United States doesn’t have very many troops there, certainly not enough to scare neighboring countries much. However, our presence in Israel is very clearly felt by every country in the Middle East. Not only do we send them military aid and conduct joint military operations on an annual basis, we have written and unwritten treaties with Israel guaranteeing their national defense. While neighboring countries have routinely threatened to invade Israel, the perceived American military presence has kept them in check.

***Direct Military Action***

I put this entry last because for many debaters, this is where our minds jump first when we think of mitigating international conflicts. However, if one wants to mitigate a conflict, it is usually wise to try some of the other alternatives before the bullets start flying. That said, military action is sometimes necessary to stop a conflict from getting any worse, or to lessen its effects.

The problem with many applications from this category is that often when the United States gets involved with direct military action, we escalate the conflict rather than mitigating it. Even if the conflict is smaller after we leave, a solution rather than mitigation is often our goal. During World War II, we didn’t casually say “hey, let’s go mitigate Japan”. We were so set on completely eliminating the threat we were willing to use atomic weapons. Mitigation implies that we are trying to reduce the severity of a situation, not eliminate it completely. Make sure you have an adequate explanation for how mitigation, and not a solution, was the goal of any application you choose to use.

**Conclusion**

That small word “mitigate” has a much bigger impact on the round than one might at first assume. While I don’t recommend using a different interpretation of the word just to throw your opponent for a loop, knowing what view your case utilizes is important.

Also, by examining the different ways the United States has mitigated conflicts historically, you can escape the trap of just using World War II in every debate round. I would love to see a case built off of mitigating conflicts via soft power. Be creative with your applications! You’ll have more fun, and your judge will too.

More on Morals: The Origins of Moral Theory

by Ciera Horton

There are two main philosophical branches of moral theory: teleological and deontological. We’re going to give you a brief overview of the origins of moral theory, so you have a foundation in order to philosophically uphold or disprove moral obligations in regards to government intervention.

Teleology refers to examining the inherent good of an end result. Teleological ethics is formally defined as, “theory of morality that derives duty or moral obligation from what is good or desirable as an end to be achieved.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Are you striving for something moral or praiseworthy? If so, then it does not matter what action make, so long as you achieve a laudable end result. This is commonly referred to as a consequentialist philosophy, which means that you determine morality, and thereby moral obligations, by the consequences. However, this would also lead to the conclusion that one could do the same act under two different circumstances with different conclusions and one time it would be moral and the other immoral.

Deontology refers to duty, simply doing the right thing because it is in adherence to universal moral law. Deontological ethics says that someone has a moral obligation to do what is right simply because it is right and that one has a duty to follow moral law.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Under these two branches of philosophy, there are countless moral theories. We’re going to look at a few of the most common, along with the philosophers who studied these different ideologies. This will help you get a better understanding of moral obligations, where they come from and how they relate to governments.

**Immanuel Kant**: German philosopher Immanuel Kant believed in deontological ethics and he spent a great deal of time studying the origins of morality and obligations. His ideas are very applicable and are the foundation of my Affirmative Case in the back of the book.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Kant argued that morals are universal. But how do you determine what is a moral action without bringing religion into a round? Kant’s categorical imperative showed a way to choose between right and wrong.

Categorical Imperative: “an unconditional moral obligation that is binding in all circumstances and is not dependent on a person's inclination or purpose.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

He said that to determine the morality of an action, you need to universalize it. Ask yourself, would it be good if everyone in the world made this action? If the answer is yes, then, according to Kant, the action would be moral. (Example: would it be good if everyone told the truth? Yes, because then there would be no deception and people would be happy, which is a good thing. Therefore, telling the truth is moral.) Kant then applied this by his discussion on obligations that stem from this basis for morality. According to Kant, one can do a moral, good action for three reasons.

**I do the right thing because...**

**Moral Obligation Moral Inclination Moral Self-Interest[[65]](#footnote-65)**

For example, donating to charity could be considered a moral inclination. You choose to do it because it’s praiseworthy—you are not obligated. However, some argue you would be obligated to save someone’s life. It will be helpful this year to learn to distinguish between moral inclination, moral self-interest and moral obligation because it will help you to either affirm or negate the resolution and respond to various examples and applications your opponent may present.

**John Locke:** John Locke is another important philosophical figure this year, particularly for the Negative constructive and the Affirmative rebuttal. Locke revolutionized the morality debate through his studies on natural rights. He believed that there were three inalienable rights to which everyone was entitled and that government was established to protect these rights: life, liberty and property. It was moral to protect, and thereby immoral to harm, these natural rights, as seen through Locke’s views on natural law. Natural law refers to unchanging moral principles that are considered to be standards for human conduct. Locke believed that moral rules are obligatory and binding because they arise from the authority of natural law — and that individuals and governments alike are morally obligated to preserve these rights. Because his theory is based on inherent duty, he adhered to deontological ethics.[[66]](#footnote-66)

So how does this specifically relate to governments and intervention?

Locke believed that, outside of government and social structure, people exist in what is called the state of nature, where everyone is equal without political power over another, but where there is anarchy. In order to protect the individual and their rights, people enter into a social contract to live under a government. Locke believed the social contract is established to avoid a state of war, because getting involved in violence and war was less likely under the protection of governing authorities. As part of this social contract, individuals agree to consent to the leadership and to sacrifice some of their rights in order to be better protected.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Stemming from this, Locke argued that government must follow several preconditions, the first of which would be to protect their citizens’ rights and to preserve national sovereignty and security. One of government’s other obligations is to preserve its society from external threats, which could arguably relate to mitigating international conflict that could soon become a threat to their own nation.

How can you use all of this in a round?

**Affirmative:** I would recommend laying the foundation of universal morality, using Kant’s principles. Then you will need to establish how mitigating conflict and helping other nations in need is inherently the right thing to do and, therefore, is morally binding. Find an external standard to measure this scope of morality — such as life, liberty or natural rights — and show that, because governments have an inherent moral obligation to protect some value such as life, they are morally obligated to intervene.

Furthermore, you can use John Locke by stating that governments have an obligation to their own citizens that is morally and legally binding through the Social Contract. Therefore, intervention is not only morally obligatory but could also be for the betterment of the United States, too. Find applications and examples of where America got involved in foreign affairs both because it was morally laudable and because it helped them in the end.

You can also side with Teleology and base your case around the principle that the moral obligation exists because you are striving towards a moral end, which could be illustrated in values such as General Welfare or Human Rights.

In my Affirmative case, I focused on natural rights and argued that because governments are morally obligated to preserve natural rights, specifically life, they are obligated to intervene in international conflict when these rights are being infringed upon.

**Examples:** American involvement in World War 2 was prompted by motivations of self-interest and therefore founded on the social contract because it was to protect citizens’ rights. You could also use America’s involvement in World War 1, sparked by the sinking of the Lusitania and the Zimmerman note. Both are prime examples of America intervening in international conflict in a way that also helped their own citizens and protected national sovereignty. You could use these examples two different ways, either stating that we acted because of an inherent duty or because we were striving towards a moral end. Establish the framework in your case.

**Negative**: You can use the concept of moral inclination. You could establish that getting involved in international conflict is morally laudable but not binding or obligatory. Be sure to make a clear distinction between inclination and obligation in the framework of your case.

Going a different path, you can argue teleologically and show how intervention in international conflict has negative ramifications, is not successful and so, therefore, we have no moral obligation to act because we are not striving towards a moral end.

As the Negative, you could establish your value or principle as the purpose of government or original duties of government. This would link you to John Locke and his philosophy on the social contract. You could argue that the United States government does not have a moral obligation to intervene in foreign affairs because their only obligation is to their citizens and to protect their peoples’ natural rights. Whereas the Affirmative might argue that assisting may help themselves, you can agree with this and say that involvement in foreign conflict might protect national security but it is not a moral obligation. Draw a clear distinction between moral obligation, inclination and self-interest, as shown through the Immanuel Kant chart.

You can continue to find examples of how America got involved but how it was only for self-interest and it was not out of a moral obligation. Both America’s involvement in World War 1 and 2 are good examples of this.

**Debating Morality**

Every round you have this year should rest on the crux of morality. Even when addressing your opponent’s value, criterion and contentions, everything should come back to their outline and framework on where the moral obligation comes from and why it applies. Therefore, it will be helpful to have some counter arguments to the theories we have discussed. I would recommend deciding whether you want to support Teleology or Deontology in your case and go from there. Below are a few questions and thoughts to help you wrestle through both sides.

**Teleology**: How can we actually determine the range of possible consequences any action will have? Is it implied then that it does not matter what action we make, so long as we have a good, praiseworthy result? Then how much “good” is necessary to outweigh the probable “evil” of our action? (In other words, is this a complex way of saying that the ends justify the means?) For example, is stealing ever permissible? If I steal food to save a child from dying then am I acting morally? Therefore, is there any universal standard or is it all subject to supposed conclusions and consequences?[[68]](#footnote-68)

Decide what you believe about consequentialist philosophy and know how to respond to it. If you see that your opponent is running Teleology, trap them in cross examination and get them to admit this flaw in logical structure. How can we properly determine morality if we are only judging it based upon the conclusion, which we can’t always foresee?

**Deontology**: What happens where two morally good values are in conflict? According to deontological ethics, someone could have the duty to be honest and a duty to keep others from harm, but where is the determinant to decide when one outweighs the other? If the answer is to choose between the lesser of two evils, then are we not deciding our moral action based upon extenuating circumstances and possible consequences, lending us towards consequentialism? Furthermore, what makes something a duty? What external standard tells us what is a morally binding duty, and is this not determined by past consequences and end results that have led us to believe what is right and wrong? Should we follow a duty regardless of the consequence? (For example, should we tell the truth even if someone will get hurt?) When should we disregard inherent duty in favor of the consequence and when should we follow this declared duty?[[69]](#footnote-69)

Deontology is probably going to be more common this year — which means that you need to be more familiar with it. If you run deontology, duty-based morality, be sure to provide some sort of external standard that will determine what these duties actually are. How do we know what is a moral duty, in other words a moral obligation, versus a morally laudable action that we are not required to fulfill?

A word of caution to both the Affirmative and the Negative: Do not find yourself in the pitfall of arguing that foreign intervention is either helpful or harmful and that its success either affirms or negates the Resolution. It does not matter. You are trying to prove the existence of a moral obligation, or lack thereof. Now, it can be argued that a moral obligation can be formulated when you are striving towards a moral end, which is in line with teleology. This is still based upon intention and subsequent action, not reflection on past occurrences to determine whether we had a moral obligation. Keep in mind that you will not know the result when faced with an action of international conflict. You will need to philosophically prove your case and find an external standard for why the moral obligation exists. Applications will not function as the foundation for your case.

Yes, foreseen results are important and you should be striving towards a moral end. But you cannot look back on a situation in history and say something along the lines of, “Because we succeeded in mitigating this conflict, we had a moral obligation to act.” What if you had a moral obligation to save a life and failed to do so in the process? Did you no longer have a moral obligation because you did not succeed in your pursuit of upholding a moral end? Of course not! Just keep this in mind this year.

In conclusion, it will behoove you to study up on your philosophers this year and be able to distinguish between teleology and deontology in a round. From here, you can discern different theories on moral philosophy, such as consequentialism and universal morality, as shown through the categorical imperative. It may help you to create philosophy briefs to have with you in a round. And remember to find a basis for your case that will prove the existence of a moral obligation without becoming dependent on applications that fail to support a philosophical argument.

Part 2: Affirmative Cases

**What’s so Natural about Natural Rights?**

By Ciera Horton

**Be Not Afraid of Greatness**

By Zachary Leoni

**We are Family: International Conflicts Is a Threat to National Security**

By Elizabeth Jacobs

**Those Who Watch and do Nothing**

By Michael Tcheau

**The Samaritan Principle**

By Travis Herche

**With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility**

By Aaron Dykstra

**Strategy of Necessity: The Case for National Interests**

By Jesse Byrnes

What’s so Natural About Natural Rights

by Ciera Horton

Teddy Roosevelt once said, “...While a nation's first duty is within its own borders, it is not thereby absolved from facing its duties in the world as a whole…”[[70]](#footnote-70)

Because I agree with Roosevelt, I affirm today’s resolution. Resolved: The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflict.

**Definitions:**

Moral obligation is defined as, “a duty which one owes...ought to perform.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

Mitigate is defined as to “make less severe, serious or painful.”[[72]](#footnote-72)

International Conflict is defined as “conflicts between different nation-states...and inter-group conflicts within one country when one group is fighting for independence or increased social, political or economic power.”[[73]](#footnote-73)

Before we move into my value, I want to address one key issue. The United States government is a moral agent. Moral agency is defined as: “the capacity to act morally or immorally.”[[74]](#footnote-74) All governments act as collective moral entities. They are able to make moral or immoral decisions. Therefore, governments, and subsequently the United States, can have moral obligations.

**Value: Preservation of Life**

My value today is that of the preservation of life. I believe that the value of life is inherent. The United States is bound by moral obligation to do whatever is in their power to protect life and therefore are obligated to mitigate conflict when lives of citizens in a given nation are being unjustly harmed. When a government fails to protect its own people in situations of conflict, the United States has the authority and responsibility to intervene.

**Criterion: Natural Rights Theory**

The natural rights theory is a collection of philosophical principles outlining the existence of inalienable rights - namely life - and how they should be protected. The Natural Rights Theory explains that protecting natural rights is moral and refusal to protect natural rights is immoral. When bound by universal standards of morality, as outlined by philosophers Immanuel Kant and John Locke, there is an obligation to protect natural rights. This theory shows how life is valuable and how governments are morally obligated to preserve life because failure to do so would be to undermine the sanctity of natural rights.[[75]](#footnote-75)

**Contention 1: The United States has a moral obligation to protect life.**

It is absolutely true that a government’s primary obligation is to its people. In addition, governments do have a moral obligation to protect life in other countries as well. This is because of the Natural Rights Theory and the understanding that protection of life is in adherence to inherent standards of morality.

Consider, for example, how the US intervened in the Sudanese conflict. In 2003, a rebellion broke out known as the Sudanese Liberation Movement, which prompted a genocide and led to the displacement of over two million people and over 400,000 deaths.[[76]](#footnote-76) Instead of ignoring this conflict, the US and NATO took action. Peacekeeping forces were sent to Darfur to protect the innocent civilians and to help end this conflict. According to the United States Agency for International Development, today, Sudan is our highest priority in Africa because of “its importance for counter-terrorism and regional stability, as well as the magnitude of human rights and humanitarian abuses.”[[77]](#footnote-77)

We had a moral obligation to get involved because innocent people were being killed, which denied their inalienable natural right to life. According to the US Agency for International Development archives, “USAID works to strengthen Sudanese capacity to address the causes and consequences of political conflict, violence, and instability. This includes building the capacity of local authorities...to mitigate potentially catalytic conflicts. In Darfur, USAID supports civil society and community organizations in early recovery and peace-building activities.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

**Contention 2: Refusal to protect life is immoral.**

When a situation arises and is presented to the global community where life is being threatened, the refusal for the United States to act would be immoral.

My case study to explore this point is the Rwandan Genocide. It was estimated by the Human Rights Watch that around 500,000 people were massacred. The United States, along with Belgium, France and the United Nations, knew what was happening and did nothing.[[79]](#footnote-79)

U.S. President Clinton later reflected, saying, “The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy, as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killing began.”[[80]](#footnote-80)

The United States had a moral responsibility, an obligation to act out of considerations of morality and the value of human life. However, we failed to uphold our duty and get involved in this conflict.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan mourned, saying, “The world must deeply repent his failure...We will not deny that, in their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda.”[[81]](#footnote-81)

Because we refused to act, more innocent lives were lost. Had we adhered to the Natural Rights Theory, we would have held the preservation of life as the paramount value.

**Contention 3: Obligation is fulfilled based upon ability.**

According to the Naval Institute, “Those who have the capability, have a moral obligation to intervene…”[[82]](#footnote-82) I wholeheartedly agree. In order to understand the applicability of moral obligations in regards to the United States, we need to understand the difference between primary and secondary responsibilities. Our first duty is to our own citizens, which fulfills our original purpose as manifested through the social contract. However, we still have a moral obligation to be involved in the international community and protect the inherent value of life. This is because our government acts as a moral agent and moral agents are bound to protect life as the highest value, illustrated in the Natural Rights Theory.

But what happens when our government is not stable and is therefore unable to assist and mitigate conflict? We would first side with our people, as our secondary obligation is limited by the primary.

A prime example of this is the United States’ involvement in World War 2. The treaty of Versailles, which ended World War 1, was not signed by America because President Woodrow Wilson believed it would have negative ramifications. The treaty severely punished Germany, which later led to Germany trying to rebuild its national sovereignty in the Second World War. The United States did not get involved in this international conflict because we had warned Europe about the dangers of the treaty of Versailles and because getting involved in a war given our economic state in the Depression would not have been in the best interest of our people. Therefore, we did not get involved until after December 7, 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. We then intervened in this international conflict, but we did not allow this secondary obligation violate our primary.[[83]](#footnote-83)

Yes, we did lose American lives through our military intervention. However, our action was justified because of protecting our own national sovereignty and the international community as a whole.

Today we’ve seen that because the United States acts a moral agent in the international community, we are bound by adherence to moral law. We cannot turn a blind eye to situations where life is being taken unjustly. We should adhere to the Natural Rights theory and protect life in other countries through our involvement in international conflict.

Negative Brief against Aff Case   
“What’s so Natural about Natural Rights?”

by Ciera Horton

Definitions: I love addressing definitions in my rebuttals! You can begin by addressing the definition of conflict. Should the United States intervene in every single prolonged disagreement or fight? If the answer is no, then what is the external standard by which to judge when we have a moral obligation?

Moral Agency: The foundation of this case is in the framework and the moral agency argument. In order to defeat this case, you need to attack this core principle. You have a few options.

1. Argue amoral government. You can argue that the United States - governmentally - is not a moral agent. Individual people in the government, such as the president, secretary of state and speaker of the house, are moral agents because they are living beings. In order to win this argument, you will need to address the Affirmative’s definition of moral agency with your own counter definition.

2. Argue topicality. You can say that it doesn’t really matter. Yes, the United States has moral obligations because our country acts as a moral agent. But how does that prove the resolution?

You can also tear apart the Affirmative here in CX:

Are morals universal? (The Affirmative will probably say yes. If not, then catch them on agreeing to relative morality and show there is no absolute standard.)

So there is an absolute standard for morality?

So if something is a moral obligation, it is absolute and always exists, correct?

Therefore, are governments always obligated to protect life through mitigating conflict?

If they are always obligated, can nothing limit this obligation? (By this point, they have to agree that nothing can stop or limit this obligation. Then you can twist this against Contention 3, where they list the limiting factor of the primary obligation to citizens. In every situation when the US is providing aid military or financially, couldn’t those resources have been used for our own people? When do we choose to help others instead of just helping ourselves?

Value: This is a pretty strong value. If your Negative case allow, I would recommend arguing that protecting life in every country is not a government’s moral obligation, because it violates its purpose through the social contract. Instead, it is a moral inclination. (See my article for the chart on moral inclinations.)

Criterion: Natural rights usually include life, liberty and property. Show that this is often self-negating. After all, John Adams famously said, “Give me liberty or give me death.” Are we upholding all of these natural rights, or only life?

Refusal to Act: When the United States mitigates conflict, usually we assist militarily. This means that we will be giving our soldiers’ lives. Are we then trapped in a moral dilemma between protecting the lives of our people and the lives of others?

**Applications:**

Sudan - Research improvement in Darfur. It’s interesting to note that things are not much better in Sudan today. You can argue that we wasted millions of US dollars and put American soldiers at risk yet we gained little.

Rwanda - Research the American involvement in Somalia. You can turn the impact on this application through some historical analysis, showing that we kept from acting out of considerations of national self-interest.

World War 2 - If we refrained from intervening because it would have harmed our own people, then did we really have a moral obligation to intervene? And if so, did we violate it? The Affirmative is arguing that the primary obligation limits the secondary, which you can spin and say that we only have to assist when it helps—or doesn’t harm—our own citizens. Therefore, we aren’t morally obligated to help but it’s just a good thing to do.

Be Not Afraid of Greatness

by Zachary Leoni

Michel was five years old when he was recruited as a soldier in Congo. The men who kidnapped him blindfolded him, slashed his wrist and rubbed cocaine and gunpowder into the wound. Michel felt woozy and his head pounded. He felt a gun placed in his hands. The soldiers started chanting “shoot, shoot, shoot.” His hand shook violently as he pulled the trigger. A rebel removed the blindfold and Michel saw his best friend Kevin, lying on the ground. He ran over to him, screaming and begging the soldiers for help. But they only laughed. Then, a huge man carrying a machine gun said something Michel would never forget. "You've killed your best friend. Your family will never take you back. We are your only family now.

Michel suffered unspeakable horror for years, not because the world could not stop it, but because the world would not stop it. In light of the appalling situation that millions of people currently find themselves in I stand resolved that “The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.”

I’ll be clarifying and establishing the bounds of the resolution in two points of observation.

**Observation 1: Definitions**

We all know that the United States is the nation in which we currently reside, but there are a few key terms that I think could use a little more clarity.

The *Free Legal Dictionary* defines a **moral obligation** as: “A duty which one owes, and which he ought to perform, but which he is not legally bound to fulfill.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

*Alpha Dictionary,* a free online dictionary of military terms, defines **mitigate** as: “to lessen, make easier, or bearable.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

An **international conflict** is a conflict that takes place in whole or in part outside the borders of the United States.

**Observation 2: Resolutional Analysis**

The resolution is proposing the United States has an ethical duty to protect innocent people from being harmed by war.

The value I’ll be presenting today is the value of **Respect for Human Dignity**, operationally defined as: “*having a high regard for the well being, safety, and fundamental human rights of every human being*.”

I believe this value should be prioritized for two unique reasons:

**First, Compromising Human Dignity Destroys Life**

In everything we do we must prioritize human rights. Failing to do so destroys morality and justifies actions like the Trans-Atlantic slave trade where slave traders chose to prioritize their profit margins above dignity of those they were exploiting which according to *Professor Peter L Patrick* resulted in an estimated 55 million deaths.[[86]](#footnote-86)

**Secondarily, Human Dignity Weighs the Resolution**

The resolution is asking us whether or not the U.S. should take steps to minimize the destruction of war. If we truly respect Human Dignity we will take the steps necessary to insure that innocent people are not killed, mangled, and dehumanized by the all-consuming engine of war.

**Contention 1: The Horror of War**

War is like a fire; it kills, destroys, maims, and is insatiable. Ignoring a war is just as deadly as ignoring a forest fire. . Like Ayn Rand once said: “you can avoid reality, but you cannot avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.”[[87]](#footnote-87) War costs three resources.

**A) Blood**

Ishmael was twelve years old when government trucks pulled up and took him away. He was handed a machete and sent alongside hundreds of other boys to attack a village. He didn’t want to hurt anyone, but he was afraid of what the soldiers would do to him if he didn’t obey. When the soldiers finally let him leave, everyone in the village was dead. Ishmael didn’t fight alone, 10,000 other children were forced to undergo the same horror during Sierra Leone’s civil war.[[88]](#footnote-88)

**B) Sweat**

According to CNN News, African warlords, insurgencies, and civil wars are often funded by illicitly obtained minerals known as blood diamonds.[[89]](#footnote-89) Those diamonds mines are operated primarily by forced laborers who are often beaten, and sickeningly mutilated. According to BBC News: “Apart from the innocent people caught in conflicts commercial fuels, thousands of men, women and children in countries like Sierra Leone are used as slaves to mine diamonds. They are often forced to use primitive methods such as digging in hard clay or gravel along the river banks with their own hands. The collected material is separated by hand sieves.”[[90]](#footnote-90)

**C) Tears**

According to the Sudan Tribune: “The suffering and destruction of children in Darfur is an obscenity beyond reckoning, beyond redemption, beyond forgiveness. During the course of this genocidal conflict, the number of children who have been killed, raped, wounded, displaced, traumatized, or endured the loss of parents and families is well over 1 million. Most of these children have suffered multiple forms of violence, loss, and deprivation. Moreover, their futures are bleak in ways we can only now begin to discern, though that bleakness will come into steadily sharper relief as humanitarian organizations slowly withdraw their financial support for current efforts on the ground in Darfur.”[[91]](#footnote-91)

**Contention 2: Great Power, Great Responsibility**

Blaise Pascal once said: “Justice and power must be brought together, so that whatever is just may be powerful, and whatever is powerful may be just.”[[92]](#footnote-92) America has been vested with the unprecedented power to destroy leaders, armies and nations with the mere push of a button. American power brought an end to the Iron Curtain, child soldiers in Congo, and human trafficking in Sierra Leone, but we cannot become complacent. Like John F. Kennedy famously stated: “To whom much is given, much is expected.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

American intervention is vital for two reasons.

**Reason 1) Intervention Protects Innocent People.**

Sam Childers, is an American missionary who has risked his life for the last 15 years rescuing child soldiers in Northern Uganda.[[94]](#footnote-94) Sadly while he has been hailed by the Ugandan government, and Human Rights groups around the world as a hero he has received absolutely no support from U.S. government. We have the ability to mitigate conflicts in Uganda by snatching child soldiers out of the hands of ruthless criminals, but we aren’t. That needs to change.

**Reason 2) Intervention Promotes National Security**

The American government has the sacred duty to protect the American citizen who gives nearly a third of his or her pay check to the U.S. Government through taxes. Intervention primarily provides a check against force escalations such as chemical, biological and nuclear warfare. Additionally, intervention via helping foreign nations battle terror allows us to fights terrorists thousands of miles away instead of our own backyards. The choice is simple, fight them with drones in Yemen, or fight them house to house in America.

War isn’t about who’s right, it’s about who’s left. To avoid such a morally bankrupt system I suggest we nip it in the bud, by affirming that the U.S. has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.

Negative Brief against Aff Case “Be Not Afraid of Greatness”

By Zachary Leoni

No case is perfect, especially ones that I write. Right now any debater who has ever done policy debate is probably itching to cross ex me on the solvency of my implied policies. There first question would probably be: “Can you give me a recent example where American intervention actually saved lives?” Likely the entire rebuttal to the affirmative case would rest on the simple fact that we live in a great nation, but our great nation has a less than great track record in regards to actually making the world a better place through our military strength.

Vietnam, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Grenada, Cuba, Somalia, etc. These are the places where the U.S. has intervened recently. They are also some of the worst places known to mankind. The U.S. has historically fumbled the ball in regards to actually promoting long-lasting peace in regards to small scale conflicts. We were a powerful force in both world wars, and kept South Korea independent, but those were major wars where our military could actually crush an army. When it comes to getting desert tribesmen and jungle warriors to lay down their spears and AK-47’s and get along, well we aren’t too great at that.

Our efforts usually exacerbate the issue by destroying any semblance of stability and deposing the very men that while extraordinarily brutal are usually the only people capable of maintaining any kind of order. Also, when the U.S. supports somebody, it usually comes back to bite us (Saddan Hussein, Bin Laden, etc.). Iran is a great example of this. If you study the history of U.S. involvement in Iranian politics it’s no mystery why many of their leaders hate us so much. The U.S. is great at stopping world powers from trying to take over the world, but even America, the great country that it is, can’t find a way to make peace between cultures who have been feuding for thousands of years. Worse than that, we usually destabilize the country so much that we cause even more deaths. Just some thoughts to keep in mind when you run up against an affirmative case like mine.

We Are Family: International Conflict is a Threat to National Security

by Elizabeth Jacobs

“A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.”[[95]](#footnote-95) *George Bush, Address after September 11, 2001.*

It is because I believe this great nation should be protected, I stand **Resolved:** The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.

For clarity in today’s debate round I present the following definitions.

1. **Moral:** *Cambridge Dictionary* **“**[relating](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=relating) to [standards](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=standards) of good [behavior](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=behavior), [honesty](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=honesty), and [fair](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=fair) [dealing](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=dealing), or [showing](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=showing) high [standards](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=standards) of this [type](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=type).” [[96]](#footnote-96)
2. **Obligation:** *Cambridge Dictionary* “something that a [person](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=person) [feels](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=feels) [morally](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=morally) or [legally](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=legally) [forced](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/search/american-english/direct/?q=forced) to do” [[97]](#footnote-97)
3. **Mitigate:** *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* “to cause to become less harsh or hostile.”[[98]](#footnote-98)
4. **Conflict:** *American Heritage Dictionary,* “A state of open, often prolonged fighting; a battle or war.”[[99]](#footnote-99)

I present the **value** of **National Security.** National Security is operationally defined as “maintaining survival of the state through economic, military and political means.” This value ideally represents the resolution as seen in the following value links.

**Value Link 1: *Purpose of Government.*** Governments were created to ensure that individuals are safe and protected. Governments must be secure enough to create a functional force in order to accomplish that. Both the affirmative and the negative can agree that a Government’s purpose is to provide national security for its citizens.

**Value Link 2: *Resolutional Goal.***  This resolution holds that governments are obligated to behave in a moral way internationally. That is putting it very simply, but what is obvious is that this resolution is exploring which methods produce the most peace and moral behavior both at home and abroad. The goal of national security is just that. National security aims to protect life through the functionality of government.

Let’s explore the resolution further in my resolutional analysis.

**RA) Global Threats are Domestic Threats.**

My opponent may come up to the podium and say that the only moral obligation of a government is to protect its own citizens. I would completely agree, but let’s take a look at the resolution. I am asked to defend that the United States has a moral obligation mitigate a battle or war. In the resolution we are not examining international squabbles, instead we are looking at true conflicts between countries. When such a prolonged war or battle occurs, it disrupts the global community. It becomes a threat to domestic tranquility. It is absolutely the moral obligation of our government to mitigate such a threat in the name of national security.

This is further proved in my contention with three applications.

**C1) Mitigating Conflicts Protects National Security**

**Application 1: *Spanish American War:*** In 1898 the United States declared war on Spain due to conflicts in Cuba. Spain’s imperialistic attitude toward Cuba contained the threat of crippling Cuba’s economic trade with the United States. After we declared war, American naval power quickly took down Spanish forces. There was less than a month of actual military conflict before the Spanish forces agreed to an unconditional surrender. By the end of the year Cuba was established as an independent nation. [[100]](#footnote-100)

This was at the very beginning of our country’s legitimacy. It showed the world that the United States was a force to be dealt with. If we didn’t intervene, there would have been a long and grueling conflict between Spain and Cuba. The United States quickly resolved a conflict, ensured economic stability, and national security for its citizens.

**Application 2: *The First* *Gulf War:*** During the 1990s there was enormous tension between Kuwait and Iraq. When this boiled over in the Gulf War, it affected the more than just Iraq and Kuwait. This conflict was complex and economic impacts would have had long term affects. The United States realized the impact of this conflict would affect national security and had a moral obligation to intervene.

The United States executed Operation Desert Storm with incredible efficiency. According to *The History Channel,* “After 42 days of relentless attacks by the allied coalition in the air and on the ground, U.S. President George H.W. Bush declared a cease-fire on February 28; by that time, most Iraqi forces in Kuwait had either surrendered or fled.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

The United States had a moral obligation to get involved, and becoming involved was the best solution.

**Application 3: *Afghanistan:*** Everyone has a differing opinion on the recent intervention in Afghanistan. Many would make the assertion that intervening in Afghanistan was the worst thing the United States has done for the region. However, the facts point to the reality that we have rebuilt the Afghan military so that it can defend itself.

*The Washington Post reported,* “NATO training since 2009 has dramatically ramped up the Afghan National Security Forces, bringing it up from 40,000 men and women six years ago to about 352, 000 today. Once the transition is announced, coalition troops will move entirely into a supporting role — training and mentoring, and in emergency situations providing the Afghans backup in combat, mainly in the form of airstrikes and medevac.”[[102]](#footnote-102)

When we leave Afghanistan in 2014, it will be far better equipped to deal with the Taliban. The Taliban presents a global impact if ignored. Whether you believe intervening in Afghanistan was a good idea or not, the fact is, the region is far more stabilized militarily. The United States and NATO’s role in training Afghani soldiers not only protects Afghanistan, but it also ensures the national security of the United States.

Our country cannot sit silent to the chaos in the world because that chaos damages our own safety.

George W. Bush wonderfully summed up this idea when he said, “Defending our nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us. To defeat this threat we must make use of every tool in our arsenal—military power, better homeland defenses, law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing. The war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration. America will help nations that need our assistance in combating terror. And America will hold to account nations that are compromised by terror, including those who harbor terrorists— because the allies of terror are the enemies of civilization. The United States and countries cooperating with us must not allow the terrorists to develop new home bases. Together, we will seek to deny them sanctuary at every turn.” [[103]](#footnote-103)

Negative Brief against Aff Case “We are Family”

By Elizabeth Jacobs

**General Concept**

The key with this case is to fight the basic idea that we need to actively take down terrorists and other international threats. This case claims that any international threat will harm national security therefore it is a moral obligation. That idea is a pretty big jump, take down those links and the case falls apart. If you dismantle the logical idea by discussing how we often make the situation worse.

**Value:**

This case is fairly value centric, so it is tempting to take down the value. You can fight national security with basic arguments about how countries can be completely secure, but we still need much more important things like human rights. However, this cases hinges on the idea that national security is so vital that we *must* do everything we can to mitigate conflicts because they threaten us. This link is much weaker than the actual idea of national security. So your response would be…

**Mitigation is not Secure:** Discuss that when we mitigate often times our country is *less* secure. Moreover, mitigation does not ensure national security. National security is great, but it doesn’t link to the resolution as well as your value.

**Applications:**

**1) The Spanish-American War:** This can be taken down by looking at the repercussions after the war. We were still very involved in Cuba and that intervention has tension that still exists today. More fun though, you can make this application disappear by de-linking it from national security. This wasn’t a full-blown war until *after* the U.S. got involved. Spain was just annoying Cuba, so we took control and reaped some economic benefits. If you look at the definition of conflicts in this case, it says “a battle or war” this wasn’t a conflict until we got involved. So this application is (1) harmful to Cuba and (2) non topical.

**2) The First Gulf War:** This is probably the strongest application in the case. It is an example where the U.S. getting involved was the best for all parties. You could definitely argue that this caused negative repercussions in relations, the region, and so on, but it will be a fact debate back and forth and lose traction. I think the best response would be isolated incident. This is a great example of good intervention, but it’s only one example. Not only was that, but the reason Saddam Hussein was in power was because of U.S. mitigation in the first place. All of a sudden, this application becomes tiny and you’re set.

**3)** **Afghanistan:** This is really fun. Talk about how countering terrorism often leads to a worse problem. This application would be great to turn. Bring up all the civilians killed in Afghanistan by American troops, and civilians hate for America the longer we stay there. Mitigation actually harms national security because it aggravates the issue.

At this point, the case is dismantled and you get to have a blast with your case!

Those who Watch and do Nothing

by Michael Tcheau

A young seven year old girl hugs her rag doll as she curls up under a tree. Five hours ago, her family was shot to death by communist soldiers. After running for what seemed like days, the little girl is finally too exhausted to continue. As she lies sobbing on the ground, clutching her doll, she hears footsteps. Terrified, she looks up to see a soldier bearing the dreaded red communist emblem on his shoulder. The man looks and starts walking towards the girl with evil intent in his eyes. Suddenly, a soft “whoosh” of air is heard, and the soldier collapses. For a second all is quiet, and then the loud cracks and bangs of machine guns ring out as American Marines open fire on the passing North Korean battalion. It is because I am not afraid to advocate hard military power to protect innocent lives that I affirm the resolution: “The US has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflict.”

**Definitions**

**Moral Obligation**: The constraining power of a promise, contract, law, or sense of duty to act simply because it is ethically right.[[104]](#footnote-104) *(Combination definition) American Heritage Dictionary.*

**Mitigate**: To make less severe. To cause to become less harsh.[[105]](#footnote-105) *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary.*

**International Conflict**: A struggle (often military) between two nations, or within a nation outside of the US.[[106]](#footnote-106) *Cambridge Dictionary*

My value in today’s round is the **value of Sanctity of Life** defined operationally as “The belief that human lives and livelihood are inherently sacred, and that all efforts are taken to protect these lives.” Sanctity of Life is the highest value because it measures the resolution. This value prioritizes the worth of human beings over all other principles. This is the purpose of the resolutional topic. We should be determining whether or not we have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflict, based on how successful we are at saving lives.

In order to protect sanctity of life, I propose my **criterion of US hegemony** operationally defined as “The promotion of US dominance in the economic, military, and social areas of the world to establish order and the protection of humanity.” To prove that hegemony is the best way to protect the value, look to my:

**Criterion Link: US hegemony saves lives.**

Hegemony saves lives by stopping human rights abuses with the use of its economic and military influences. Consider the application of Myanmar. For decades, Myanmar (formally known as Burma), has been ruled by the iron fist of dictatorship under prime minister Than Shwe who ordered the capture and execution of all political dissidents. In an effort to combat this tide, the US government passed a series of crippling economic trade sanctions against Myanmar in 2007. For several years, nothing seemed to happen. However, in 2011, the new Myanmar government agreed to comply with democratic human rights standards, and released hundreds of political prisoners in order to have the sanctions lifted. According to the Economist, “Myanmar has undergone a remarkable transformation. Ruled by the generals, the country was a blank space. Now it is finding its place again, and ordinary Burmese can aspire to share a better future.” This would not have been possible without America’s hegemony through economic influence.

**Contention 1: Hegemony mitigates international conflict**

US hegemony mitigates international conflict for two reasons.

**a. Hegemony ends internal conflict.**

Hegemony ends wars by crushing despotic leaders in charge of human rights atrocities and genocides. Consider the application of Operation Just Cause. In December of 1989, over 27,000 US soldiers were deployed to Panama in order stop Dictator Manuel Noreiga, who had begun a killing rampage through several towns. According to PBS, “The . . . stated goals of Operation Just Cause were the protection of the Panama Canal and the lives of 35,000 Americans in Panama, as well as the promotion of democracy.”[[107]](#footnote-107) The attack worked, and within weeks, the Panamanian defense forces were defeated and Noriega was captured, thus saving thousands of lives from what would have been a violent massacre.

**b. Failure to act results in more death.**

Turning a blind eye to international atrocities has resulted in the complete obliteration of civilizations. Look to the example of the Rwanda genocide. This was one instance where the US and international community failed to protect innocents. In 1994, sparked by racial tensions between the majority Hutus and minority Tutsi’s, outright civil war broke out. As expected, the Hutus overwhelmed the Tutsi’s and started massacring civilians based on races. According to UN reports, between 500,000 to as many as 1.5 million Tutsi civilians were killed.[[108]](#footnote-108) An entire ethnic group was eliminated over the span of a single year. This is what happens when we choose not to act.

**Contention 2: US hegemony is a moral obligation.**

We have a moral obligation, because US hegemony is the single most successful method to ending conflict and protecting sanctity of life. Consider my final application of the Korean War. Do you remember the story of the little girl in the introduction? Millions of innocent lives, like hers, were saved because of US forces refusing to surrender South Korea to communism. In 1950, Chinese communist forces seized North Korea and started to march on the South. Under the leadership of President Dwight Eisenhower, and General Douglas MacArthur, US troops met the North Korean and Chinese communist forces along the 38th parallel, and waged war against them for three years. Finally, after losing over 400,000 soldiers, the communist forces struck a cease-fire armistice at the 38th parallel. This line still divides North and South Korea today. Because of successful strategy and the willingness to act, South Korea was saved from Communism, and today is one of the biggest and most successful economic hubs in the world.

The decision to protect sanctity of life through hegemony is one that has ended wars and brought peace to nations that would have otherwise been destroyed by despotism. The willingness to use hard military power has saved the populations of Myanmar, Panama, and North Korea as well as many others. But, when fear prevents us from making decisions, an entire ethnic group is obliterated. The choice to protect lives is one that begins with the citizens of this nation. It’s a choice that begins with you and me. It is the choice to stare evil in the face and to defeat it, even when it’s hard. If we don’t act, who will? As Albert Einstein once said, “This world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them and do nothing.”[[109]](#footnote-109)

Negative Brief against Aff Case “Those who Watch and do Nothing”

By Michael Tcheau

**Case Overview**

This case is dangerous, not because the applications or criterion are amazing, but because the case spirit is very persuasive. The case makes the judge feel good about doing something to stop atrocities. In order to beat it, simply bring up counter applications to attack the logic behind the criterion. This is a bulldog case. The real value is not really Sanctity of Life, but rather US Hegemony. Do not get sidetracked throwing all of your arguments against the value. It is broad and persuasive, and you will most likely not be able to break it. Instead, focus on the criterion and the applications.

**Value of Sanctity of Life**

Unless you have a very different value, accept Sanctity of Life, and prove that hegemony harms it.

**Criterion of US Hegemony**

Here is where you focus all of your arguments on. Argue that for every “successful” example of US intervention, there are dozens others where American forces have been slaughtered. You could even argue that we made the conflict worse by intervening. Refer to the final three applications in my article “Over the Hege” for examples. Some great applications to consider would be the Vietnam War, the UN operations in Somalia, or American intervention in Haiti. The entire negative focus should be on proving that the criterion is flawed and harms Sanctity of Life.

**The Contentions**

Some of these applications are quite strong. Handle them with care. Make sure not to make statements like “Well it’s sad, but tough luck Rwanda…” These will most certainly lose you the round. Instead, argue that the best way to stop these kinds of atrocities is not through hard power, but instead by some other method. (I don’t really know what these other methods are, but you can probably come up with your own. Think along the libertarian lines; the free market solves everything). To me, the most persuasive responses would be based on impact weighing. Which ultimately makes a better world?

The single best thing you can do is to counter-warrant the applications. That means bringing up your own examples of interventions that fail. If you can do this successfully, you will be able to prove to the judge that we should not have a moral obligation to get involved in situations that we just make worse.

**Bonus Affirmative’s Response**

Defending the case against those kinds of arguments means that you need to advocate a certain mindset. At the end of the round, the judge needs to be thinking, “So maybe we failed to solve conflict in some areas and maybe even made it worse. But the lives that have been saved and nations that are now prospering are so much more impactful. Even if we don’t always succeed, we should still try. It’s worth a shot.” You can make the judges think this by them that nothing is perfect, but it’s still better than doing nothing and letting people be slaughtered. Use CX lines like “Should we try, even if there’s a possibility that we might not succeed?”

The Samaritan Principle

by Travis Herche

The defining adage of the amazing Spiderman is: “with great power comes great responsibility.” No ordinary person is expected to do what Spiderman does - stopping criminals and protecting the innocent as he swings through the air at the end of a web. But this comic book hero teaches us all an important lesson: that if you can help, you must help. That’s the basic idea behind the current resolution: “Resolved: that the United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.”

I will prove the resolution true using a series of points, the first of which is a broad observation about the resolution.

**Meta-Framework: Morality is Borderless.**

There’s nothing magical about a national border. There is no ethical charge associated with it. It is simply a line drawn across a map by politicians and diplomats. People should be treated as human beings no matter which side of the arbitrary line they’re standing on. Whatever arguments the affirmative and negative make in this round need to stem from this core moral idea.

Consider the application of **Navy Humanitarian Ops.** The US Navy does more than just operate the most powerful and stabilizing fleet in human history. It also engages in humanitarian relief missions all over the world. For example Navy helicopters in 1955 airlifted thousands of Mexicans stranded by a hurricane. Following a typhoon in the Philippines in 1972, the Navy provided relief to half a million people. The total number of successful humanitarian missions launched by the US Navy numbers in the hundred.[[110]](#footnote-110) Our servicemen give help wherever a need exists; they don’t concern themselves with whether the person in need has the right paperwork. That’s why they can call themselves a global force for good.

Let’s move now to my

**Value: Samaritan Principle**

A value is an external measure for the resolution. In this case, we need a value that measures moral obligation. That’s a profound concept, and one that requires a profound value framework. The Samaritan Principle is an elegant answer to this question. It has two parts, both of which must be met to create a moral obligation:

**Part A) Help is needed.** You have no moral obligation to help someone who doesn’t need you. But if a need exists, it must be filled.

**Part B) Help is possible.** You have no moral obligation to help someone if you need help just as badly. But if you are positioned to fill a need, you must do so.

The reason you should use my value is the

**Value Link: Exhaustive Moral Standard.** The two-part Samaritan Principle describes all of moral obligation, omitting nothing. If something doesn’t meet both parts of the principle, it might be praiseworthy, but it is not obligatory. That makes this value the only suitable way to measure this resolution.

The Samaritan Principle has two parts, so we’re going to analyze the resolution in two contentions.

**Contention 1: Mitigation is Needed**

Though the human race has advanced tremendously in terms of technology and social complexity, we are far from a solution to our biggest problem: human suffering. That’s an easy thing to forget here in America. Standing in line for a grande frappuccino, the last thing on our minds is that one of every 5 humans is living in extreme poverty.[[111]](#footnote-111) Resting comfortably in our beds, we find it hard to relate to people who are always on the run from ethnic, political, or religious violence.

Help is desperately needed all over the world. Consider the application of the **Nigerian Sharia Conflict.** This is a bloody war between local Christians and militant Jihadist settlers that has been raging in Nigeria since 1953.

*Mark Lipdo, speaking on behalf of the Christian charity Stefanos Foundation, witnessed one of the massacres firsthand. He told BBC News in 2010*: "We saw mainly those who are helpless, like small children and then the older men, who cannot run, these were the ones that were slaughtered."[[112]](#footnote-112)

Every year, about a thousand people die in senseless violence. After 50 years of conflict, it should be quite clear that this problem is not going to solve itself. Help is needed, and until it arrives more and more villages will be turned to ghost towns. But the Samaritan Principle asks for more. We need to have the ability to help, too.

**Contention 2: Mitigation is Possible**

If there’s one thing America is good at, it’s using lethal force. Our armed forces include a whopping 8000 tanks - 4 times more than the world’s military runner up, Russia.[[113]](#footnote-113) We have a staggering 15,000 aircraft including a swelling fleet of UAVs - sophisticated flying death robots. Perhaps most impressive, we have 11 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers projecting our influence to every corner of the globe.[[114]](#footnote-114) Our military has been designed to respond swiftly to threats wherever they arise and neutralize them with minimum civilian casualties. It is a lean and very mean machine - like a high-tech ninja. In other words, it is perfect for the task of mitigating local genocides like the one in Nigeria.

The potential success of mitigation is proven in my application of **Bosnia & Kosovo**. This was a conflict in southeastern Europe in the mid-90s. When it became clear that local forces were unable to end the war without spiraling into genocide, and when the United Nations refused to act, US-led NATO forces moved in with overwhelming air superiority. The conflict ended almost immediately. To this day, the operation is regarded as a success story for intervention.

*According to the Council on Foreign Relations in 1999:* “Suffice it to say that when the international community finally got engaged in Bosnia and pushed that country toward a sustainable peace, it did more than simply demonstrate that outside intervention can make a difference. The NATO-led international Implementation Force (IFOR) [It] united more than 30 nations, including Russia, in a unique coalition for peace and became the symbol of a new cooperative approach to security.”

So let’s review. A moral obligation to act exists when help is both needed and possible. That describes America’s response to international conflicts perfectly. We don’t always honor our moral obligation, but when we do, great things happen.

We are the most powerful nation on earth, and we have a chance to not just save lives by the thousands, but change history for the better. I hope you’ll agree with me that we should act to do so. Thank you.

Addendum to the Aff Case “The Samaritan Principle”

by Travis Herche

This is a hidden dual-value case. The first true value is Need and the second is Ability. Binding them together as the Samaritan Principle makes it easier for the judge to process, but don’t be afraid to unpack it if you get into a heated value debate.

Go for a patriotic, God Bless America feel to your speeches. You’re talking about Spiderman and F-22s and grandma’s apple pie and tire swings. The judge should feel proud of America, because America is awesome.

Here’s a fun piece of evidence speaking in general about the effectiveness of intervention.

*According to professors Paul Collier and Bjørn Lomborg of Project Syndicate in 2008:*

“Used as one part of a package, peacekeeping initiatives remain a reliable and effective way to provide stability to fragile nations and reduce the suffering of the world’s most vulnerable people.”[[115]](#footnote-115)

Negative Brief against Aff Case “The Samaritan Principle”

By Travis Herche

It’s easy to get tangled up in the contentions. Try to stick with generic responses and counter-warrants that shift the debate to your side.

To beat this case, you must defeat one or both of the following: the meta-framework and the value. Examine your own case to see what you can cross-apply most effectively. For instance, if governments are only to pursue their own interests, hit the meta-framework. If the moral obligations of governments and individuals are different, hit the value. Make your own framework as strong and appealing as possible so your refutation becomes easy.

Work your thematic core - the primary persuasive element of your position. Get some negative momentum going. The judge shouldn’t feel like he’s voting for ‘murica. He’s voting for the position that *isn’t* naive and emotional. It’s okay to vote negative!

With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

by Aaron Dykstra

Ernest Hemingway once said, “About morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after.”[[116]](#footnote-116) Hemingway makes it very clear that a person’s view of morality is based off of his or her conscience, perception and innate sense of right and wrong as a human being. Does this same standard apply to organized groups of people and governments as well? After all, a government can’t feel good or bad after acting in a certain way, like Hemingway described. I believe that a government can operate under an established code of morals, as seen through a particular country’s moral code codified in that country’s law. Essentially, a government can have a moral obligation to its own moral code as codified in law.

The resolution we have been presented with today is: The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.

As the affirmative today, I will show you why the United States does in fact have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts. To clarify what I mean by that, let me define the terms of the resolution.

Moral obligation: An obligation arising out of considerations of right and wrong.[[117]](#footnote-117)

Mitigate: Lessen or to try to lessen the seriousness or extent of. [[118]](#footnote-118)

International: Concerning or belonging to all or at least two or more nations.[[119]](#footnote-119)

Conflict: An open clash between two opposing groups. [[120]](#footnote-120)

The **value**, or standard by which we will measure the resolution is Justice, defined as: Judgment involved in the determination of rights and the assignment of rewards and punishments.[[121]](#footnote-121)

To understand how we can use Justice as our standard of the resolution, I provide the limiting **value criterion** of: Codified United States law, defined as: law enacted by the legislative body of the United States.[[122]](#footnote-122) The reason I provide this value criterion is that we must know how the moral code of the United States manifests itself.

**Resolutional analysis:**

**1)** International means between two countries, of which the US is not included. The wording of the resolution, “The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts,” implies that the US is not currently involved in the conflict.

**2)** Mitigation does not mean elimination of the conflict. It is crucial to notice that mitigation does not mean that the international conflict being mitigated will be eliminated, or even that a change in policy will occur. Mitigation means to lessen or try to lessen the seriousness or extent of. As Cicero once said, “No obligation to do the impossible is binding.”[[123]](#footnote-123)

**3)** The United States has a moral obligation to its own moral code. The US has a moral obligation to its own moral code in that whenever an international conflict violates the moral code of the US, America should speak out against that conflict.

Just like a “contractual obligation” obligates action to the terms of a contract, a “moral obligation” obligates action to the terms of morals. The codified moral code of the US must be used because the US is the actor in the resolution.

**Contention 1**: Justice must be the highest value.

Justice must be the highest value because without justice, there is no way to determine the moral code of a country. Justice sets the standard for governmental actions perfectly because it is a clear, defined, standard. All other values are subordinate to Justice as a standard to measure a country’s actions, because all other values find their worth in Justice.

**Contention 2**: America’s superpower influence.

America, being one of the world’s superpowers, has a lot of impact in the international community. By simply speaking out about a conflict that violates the United States’ moral code, attention will be brought to that conflict. The attention brought to a conflict serves as a catalyst for intervention. This intervention may come from the US, or another country. Intervention, however, is not a part of mitigation; they are two completely different things. If the United States truly upholds the definition of mitigation, it will speak out on any violations of the moral code of the United States codified in American law.

**Contention 3**: An unmitigated conflict means a devalued moral code.

If the United States does not mitigate a conflict by making its opinion known, the US is not upholding its moral obligation to its own moral code. If the United States is not willing to make its voice heard internationally, how can the citizens of the United States, who live in submission to the laws of the US, be sure that their government will uphold the laws of the land here in America? The United States must abide by its own moral code as codified in American law in its behavior both at home and abroad.

To conclude, we have seen that the United States has a moral obligation to its own codified moral code in upholding Justice by making its voice heard in international conflicts. The United States goes beyond its moral obligation to its own moral code when it intervenes in an international conflict, because intervention is different than mitigation. The affirmative has established that Justice is the highest value, moral obligations are clearly defined, and therefore, it follows logically, that the resolution must be affirmed.

Negative Brief against Aff Case “With Great Power…”

By Aaron Dykstra

This is a framework centric case, so to beat it you must either take down the logic or outweigh it with real world applications.

Mitigation:  Lessen or to try to lessen the seriousness or extent of.

This definition of mitigation is weak because it is not backed up with action on its own. The case runs the idea that intervention and mitigation are different, and it all hinges on this definition of mitigation that does not require action.

Value: Justice

Justice, as run by this case, becomes relative almost beyond belief. Because the limit on justice is codified US law, the standard of justice and therefore the morals of a country can change.

Value Criterion: Codified US law

This can change over time, making it relative to time. Before Roe v. Wade, abortion was not legal... now it is. The moral code of the US has changed dramatically in the last 100 years as seen in the debates over abortion and same-sex marriage.

Resolutional Analysis:

-The United States has a moral obligation to its own moral code.

The laws of the United States can change, so therefore the codified moral code of the United States can also change, making morality relative, according to this case.

Contention 1: Cross apply value arguments.

Contention 2: Just because the US condemns an action in an international conflict, doesn’t mean any action will be taken. Under this stance, the US could fulfill its moral obligation by simply stating that it doesn’t condone certain actions by countries involved in conflict.

Contention 3: The idea that if a country doesn’t shout out their moral code to the world they will not uphold their moral code at home has a few weak links. First off, it is the responsibility of the government to protect its people and uphold its constitution. Just because they don’t speak out against violation of their moral code abroad doesn’t necessarily mean that they won’t uphold it at home.

Strategy of Necessity:   
The Case for National Interests

by Jesse Byrnes

Human history is full of wonderful stories about compassion, life, and heartfelt optimism. It has also been marked by countless wars, diseases, and abuses of power. Oftentimes, when conflict arises in the world, lives and freedom itself are compromised. The United States, the greatest country in human history, is uniquely positioned to help in such situations. Therefore, I stand resolved: **The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.**

**Definitions**

Let’s be clear: The **United States** is a collection of 50 states in the Western Hemisphere with a relatively homogeneous society interested in freedom, diversity, and rule of law, and a heterogeneous collection of religions, social trends, subcultural groups, and political slants. It contains local, state, and federal governments.

Since the resolution is Western-centric, it’s vital to view “moral obligation” from a decidedly Western perspective. In this sense, **moral obligation** is synonymous with protecting basic, universal human rights and those principles exemplified in the United States Bill of Rights.

**Mitigate** means “to lessen” or “to make less severe.”[[124]](#footnote-124) **International conflicts** include both armed and un-armed conflicts in which the United States can play a role.

**Context**

“The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.” Let’s put that into context. First, it doesn’t specify the type of international conflicts – be it political, economic, cultural, social, religious, scientific, environmental, or another. Second, it doesn’t specify who must be involved in the conflict, whether free nations, the U.S., allies, or our enemies. Third, there is no statement on the level to which the U.S. must be involved, from soft-power diplomacy to hard-power drones in the air, only that we lessen the conflict.

**Value**

Today I will be valuing **National Interests**, defined as tangible power or influence relative to other nations as well as intangible values of human rights,[[125]](#footnote-125) such as life, liberty, freedom of thought and expression and equality before the law.[[126]](#footnote-126) As such, it is the position of the affirmative that the U.S. not only has a moral obligation to be involved to protect our military, political, and economic interests, but also to uphold human rights.

**Main Points**

**1. National Interests often depend on moral obligation**

George Washington’s 1796 farewell address is remembered best for his stern warning against foreign entanglements. (“Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct...”) But in that speech he also underscored the importance of morality for protecting our national prominence and basic human rights. “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.” Washington understood that national interests often depend on moral obligation: “Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”[[127]](#footnote-127)

**2. International conflicts often impact U.S. strategic power**

From World War II’s alliances between the Axis and Allies, the Cold War’s East-West confrontations between the U.S. and Soviet Union, and present-day Middle East tensions, international conflicts have a history of impacting U.S. strategic power. Oftentimes, the U.S. has become involved in armed conflict in order to maintain its political and economic presence; in other cases, like Iraq and Afghanistan, it becomes involved to usher in peace while building strategic power structures: military bases, command structures, democratic governments and regional alliances. Regardless of motive, international conflicts often impact U.S. strategic power, and in order to lessen the negative impacts of those conflicts we must lessen the conflicts themselves.

**3. International conflicts often threaten human rights**

Some international conflicts do not necessarily involve places of strategic interest to the U.S., such as in Bosnia and Kosovo,[[128]](#footnote-128) but are deemed important because of the humanitarian impact and threat to human rights. The ongoing bloody Sudan conflict, the search for notorious child-army enthusiast Joseph Kony, and the effervescence of the Arab Spring rippling through the Middle East are a few of the examples of international conflict threatening human rights. The U.S. as a whole – through cooperation between the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), humanitarian agencies, and average individuals – has an obligation to advocate for human rights in these areas and make the negative impacts less severe. What’s in their best interests is in our best interests, and when we advance national interests guided by the U.S. Bill of Rights, human rights are protected.

**Conclusion**

National interests depend on moral obligation, and international conflicts oftentimes pose a threat to those interests. Should we protect our interests abroad? Yes. Do we have a moral obligation to do so? Absolutely.

The negative will contend that the U.S. has no such obligation, or that if the obligation did exist that we should ignore it. I disagree. The affirmative isn’t saying that we can resolve all conflicts peacefully or that some hurt won’t come out of it, but that we have a moral obligation to try. We have a moral obligation to protect human rights. We have a moral obligation to maintain a strong power structure relative to other nations in order to protect such values. We have a moral obligation because we are both capable and willing.

I stand resolved that the U.S. has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts, and I would encourage you to stand with me.

Negative Brief against Aff Case “Strategy of Necessity”

By Jesse Byrnes

**Definitions**

The affirmative definition of **moral obligation** is difficult enough to attack because it couples basic human rights and U.S. constitutional rights. Still, one can argue that it is ethnocentric for the U.S. to try to uphold its own definition of morality (i.e., from the U.S. constitution) in other countries. When the affirmative retorts that the principles championed in our founding documents are from a broader, Enlightenment view held by the Founding Fathers, one can contend that it is still not our place to force that on others.

Also, while sufficiently covered in the Context section, the negative may take the lack of formal definition for **international conflicts** and advance their own, narrow (or very broad) counter-definition to illustrate the ambiguity of criteria justifying moral obligation.

**Value**

**National Interests** is sufficiently defined in general terms, but many foreign policy experts will agree that it’s nearly impossible to define specifically. Because of this, you have an opportunity to get you opponent to agree that your value is in the national interests, or that national interests is not necessarily an international phenomenon.

**Main Points**

**1. National Interests often depend on moral obligation**

Turn: As the affirmative pointed out himself, George Washington was against foreign entanglements. Yes, human rights depend on a sense of morals, but would not have Washington been against getting involved in international conflicts?

Also, in areas of different religious obligations, would not different moral obligations result? In this case, foreign moral obligations may not complement (they may even be oppose) national interests.

**2. International conflicts often impact U.S. strategic power**

Just because conflict has the propensity to impact U.S. strategic power doesn’t mean that it will, and if we continually involve ourselves without hesitation we’ll never know.

Also understand that the U.S. already has the largest military in the world, others paling in comparison. It spends more on its military than nearly every other nation combined, accounting for 38 percent of total global defense spending even after sequestration.[[129]](#footnote-129)

**3. International conflicts often threaten human rights**

Differentiate between intentions and results. Turning the application of Bosnia and Kosovo, point out that even when the U.S. works with others countries to advance human rights it finds itself injuring them. Without getting too involved in a cost-benefit analysis of lives lost during war, direct the judge to understand that threats to human rights do not necessarily spell the need for U.S. involvement (research U.S. involvement or the lack thereof in places impacted by the Arab Spring).

Because they have included NGOs and humanitarian relief agencies, it is important to press the affirmative to prove a specific correlation between moral obligation and the level of relief brought about through conflict mitigation. It may be worthwhile to research international conflict mediation and its relative effectiveness over the past several decades.[[130]](#footnote-130)

Part 3: Negative Cases

**Blame Canada**

By Travis Herche

**Country First**

By Ashlyn Olson

**Why Risk It? Mitigation’s Effect on National Security**

By Elizabeth Jacobs

**The Legitimization of Negation**

By Benjamin Griffith

**Morally Good, Not Morally Obligatory**

By Nick Harrington

**Government of the People: The Social Contract as Government’s Moral Obligation**

By Matthew Erickson

**Making the Right Decision**

By Joshua Tey

Blame Canada

by Travis Herche

It’s hard to see suffering in another country and choose not to act. We want to believe that real-life problems can be solved like they are in action movies. We run in, punch the bad guys, and leave. But real life is complicated, and the resolution is false.

**Value: Autonomy**

Autonomy is operationally defined as: “A state’s ability to self-govern and resolve national issues without depending on foreign powers.”

This is the best value for the round for two reasons:

**Reason to Prefer 1: Moral Imperative**

Human beings are all equal before God. They create governments to protect them in exchange for taxes and occasional compulsory service like the draft and jury duty. Governments are bound to fulfill their obligations to their own citizens, and they can’t do that without the ability to self-govern and resolve issues. A government without autonomy is hardly a government at all.

**Reason to Prefer 2: Solves Problems**

An autonomous country not only attends to the needs of its citizens, it also provides a positive influence for the rest of the world. This is proven in my

**Application: Canada.** Canada is a successful independent nation with the 9th highest per capita income in the world and the 2nd funniest accent. It has reliable armed forces that have participated in major conflicts like World War II. Its well-being has never been seriously threatened by any foreign or domestic threat since it was founded. Canada is a great example of the success of autonomy.

**Contention: Intervention Prevents Autonomy**

When the US intervenes to mitigate an international conflict, it sets the local nation back and prevents it from achieving autonomy. It other words, it hurts when it should help. This idea is well supported in American history of the last few decades.

**Application 1: Lebanon**

In 1958, forces that were hostile to the United States - backed by the Soviet Union - moved to take over Lebanon. President Eisenhower dispatched hundreds of marines to mitigate the conflict and keep the western government in power. The operation was declared a success - after all, the military objectives had all been achieved and Lebanon was still officially pro-West. But nothing had been solved. The root conflict in Lebanon was still simmering under the surface, and the American intervention had ensured that Lebanon would not be able to gain autonomy.

Soon after the first intervention, Lebanon descended into a civil war that was being funded by foreign powers like Israel and Syria. Because its opportunity for autonomy had been missed, it had no way to resolve this new conflict. The war dragged on for more than a decade and 120,000 people died. In the midst of the conflict, US Marines returned to Lebanon to keep the peace - only to be massacred by suicide bombers and forced to withdraw.

*Barbara Conry is a foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute. In 1994, she said:*

“Even if a consensus were to develop that global stability or any other objective should be pursued by all viable means, military intervention [is] would remain an unwise course in most cases. It rarely achieves its purpose and often has the perverse effect of obstructing, rather than advancing, what it seeks to achieve. (American peacekeepers in Lebanon in 1983, for example, were an aggravating rather than a stabilizing force.)”[[131]](#footnote-131)

**Application 2: Somalia**

Somalia entered a foreign-backed civil war in 1986. Belligerents included major terrorist groups, the United Nations, and Ethiopia. The United States sent in soldiers to resolve the conflict, resulting in a military debacle that was memorialized in the film *Black Hawk Down*. With each intervention, the loss of autonomy was aggravated. A quarter-century has passed. Half a million people have died. And the war continues to this day.

*A report by the Danish Institute for International Studies reported in 2009:*

“Somalia has been without a functioning state ever since 1991, when the former dictator, Siyad Barre was overthrown. None of the competing factions were strong enough to take his place as ruler of the country, producing first chaos, but gradually a form of stateless order. The international interventions [in Somalia] have ever since the failed, and counterproductive intervention by the United Nations and the United States in the early 1990 exacerbated rather than mitigated the problems, let alone solved them.”[[132]](#footnote-132)

Let’s review what we’ve learned so far. To be successful, a country needs to be autonomous. Intervening to mitigate conflict prevents autonomy and forces countries into decades-long bloody conflicts. But what happens when we don’t intervene? Let’s turn to the final application.

**Application 3: Israel**

Israel is by far the most hated and embattled country in the Middle East. It is also a strong ally of the United States, so you’d think we’d be rushing to protect it. Instead, the United States has never directly involved itself in the defense of Israel. The country has lived in constant war, facing threats in every direction. In the late 60s, Israel defeated thirteen hostile forces including Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. They did in just six days, and they did it without the help of a single American marine.

Israel is a strong, autonomous country. It has a larger economy than all of its neighbors combined, the largest number of startup companies, museums, and university degrees per capita in the world, maintains free democratic government, and invented the cell phone.[[133]](#footnote-133)

It’s hard to see suffering in another country and choose not to act. We want to believe that real-life problems can be solved like they are in action movies. We run in, punch the bad guys, and leave. But real life is complicated. Journalist Theo Sommer said: "Beware of the facile assumption that wars are fightable and winnable again. Beware of the illusion that there is a military solution to every geopolitical problem.”[[134]](#footnote-134) That’s really what the resolution boils down to: a naive assumption that every problem can be punched away. I hope you’ll choose to vote for real solutions instead. Thank you.

Addendum for Negative Case “Blame Canada”

by Travis Herche

This is an application-centric case. Make sure you beat your opponent’s applications. If possible, turn them and say that while there appeared to be a short-term benefit, in the long term the intervention hurt. If you’re up against a problematic application from the last decade or so, it’s fine to say that we can’t fully understand the result yet. It’ll be another few years before we have enough information to judge the intervention.

Try to define the resolution in a way that limits it to military intervention. If you can’t, don’t panic! Many other forms of mitigation - like humanitarian aid - can also damage autonomy.

One of the strongest parts of this case is that it concedes to the affirmative that the moral obligations of the US are universal rather than limited to citizens. It’s a great counter to affirmative cases that invest heavily in that position because it says: “Sure, I agree. You just wasted a bunch of AC time.” Then it steals the affirmative’s persuasive impetus by showing that opposing the resolution is the best way to help struggling countries.

Affirmative Brief Against Negative Case “Blame Canada”

by Travis Herche

If your interpretation of “mitigate” doesn’t focus on military intervention, shrug off the neg applications as extreme examples. Refocus the debate on your approach.

Autonomy is vulnerable to attack. Push on it; claim that it isn’t inherently good and doesn’t guarantee good outcomes. Your value does at least one of those things better.

Encyclopedic knowledge of American military history will serve you well here. For example, you can try to disrupt the narrative of the Lebanon application by arguing that the two wars in question are totally disconnected. To draw the negative’s conclusion based on those isolated facts is like saying that the invention of the automobile forced the US into two world wars. Sure, we intervened twice in Lebanon - but that doesn’t mean that the first intervention damaged Lebanon’s autonomy so much that we needed another one later.

Country First

by Ashlyn Olson

Adam Smith once asserted that the first duty of government is, “protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies.”[[135]](#footnote-135)

Too often, we become concerned with the world’s problems instead of addressing the problems facing our own country. While helping to resolve conflicts in other countries is a noble idea, the United States does not have an obligation to do so, especially if they are not equipped and prepared to take care of their own citizens. For this reason, I stand resolved that: the United States does not have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.

For the purpose of clarification in today’s debate round, I provide the following definitions.

**The United States** is defined by Princeton University’s WordNet as, “The executive and legislative and judicial branches of the federal government of the United States.”[[136]](#footnote-136)

**Moral obligation** is defined by The Free Dictionary as, “A duty which one owes, and which he ought to perform, but which he is not legally bound to fulfill.”[[137]](#footnote-137)

**Mitigate** is defined by Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary as, “to cause to become less harsh or hostile.”[[138]](#footnote-138)

And, finally, **International conflicts** is defined by Conflict Resolution Info as, “conflicts between different nation-states and conflicts between people and organizations in different nation-states…also applies to inter-group conflicts within one country when one group is fighting for independence or increased social, political, or economic power.”[[139]](#footnote-139)

Moral obligation extends to preserving **national welfare**, which will be my value in today’s debate round. Collins English Dictionary defines welfare as, “health, happiness, prosperity, and well-being in general.”[[140]](#footnote-140) Specifically, this welfare pertains to one’s own country. Since the resolution address the United States, under the negative’s position, the resolution would be: The United States government has a moral obligation to promote the health, happiness, and prosperity of its own citizens.

My criterion, or way to achieve the value of national welfare, is **stability**. Stability is defined as, “a situation in which things happen as they should and there are no harmful changes.”[[141]](#footnote-141) By establishing stability, the United States government will be able to fulfill its moral obligation to promote national welfare.

**Contention 1—National Welfare is a moral obligation**

National Welfare is a high moral obligation, and therefore should be the value we examine in today’s debate round. Moral obligation includes something that you must do out of regard for what is true and right. While we may have compassion for others’ plights around the world, the government’s true moral obligation is to one’s own country. The US Government ought to seek to protect and promote the well-being of American citizens, before concerning themselves with the rest of the world. The preamble of the United States’ Constitution says that we should, “promote the general welfare.”[[142]](#footnote-142) It would be morally unwise to neglect the citizens of our own country while somehow seeking to calm the conflicts of other nations.

**Contention 2—Mitigating International Conflicts is Not a Moral Obligation**

On the surface, mitigating international conflicts may seem good, but there is nothing inherently moral about helping other nations resolve their conflicts. In fact, sometimes US aid does more harm than actual good. In mitigating conflicts, often the United States decides to provide foreign aid. According to the National Center for Policy Analysis, “There have been no recorded monumental successes with the use of developmental aid.”[[143]](#footnote-143) Why is this the case? The Washington Times reports policymakers are still not sure how to allocate resources that will actually go to help people, instead of landing in the hands of oppressive governments.[[144]](#footnote-144) Additionally, Christopher Coyne, a Professor of Economics at George Mason University, explains that “Aid creates the incentive for already dysfunctional governments to remain ineffective.”[[145]](#footnote-145) Spending money on other countries increases our already large debt problem. Instead of worrying about other nation’s problems, we should instead concern ourselves with securing the welfare and stability of our own nation.

**Contention 3—The United States Should Focus on Promoting National Welfare**

**Sub-Point A) Domestic Problems**

Currently, the United States has over $16 trillion dollars in debt.[[146]](#footnote-146) This is a huge increase from the $9 trillion dollars in debt we were just six years ago. Before spending more money on other nations and investing time into resolving international conflicts, the United States’ government needs to focus on getting the US debt under control. Because of the dire state of our economy, the U.S. has achieved neither full stability nor national welfare. We must spend money responsibility, and deal with the job loss in poverty in our own country before concerning ourselves with other nations.

**Sub-Point B) National Security**

Terrorist attacks on US soil have been occurring since 1978.[[147]](#footnote-147) The United States government has a moral obligation to ensure the safety of its citizens in its own country. Too often, the government time and money on international relations, instead of recognizing the necessity of developing systems that prevent attacks on US soil. We must solidify our own defense force in case of attack.

In conclusion, protecting the national welfare and stability of a nation is the highest moral priority of the United States government. Therefore, I continue to stand resolved that the United States does not have a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.

Affirmative Brief against Negative Case “Country First”

by Ashlyn Olson

**Definition of United States:** If you interpret United States to mean something other than the United States’ government, make sure you point that out and provide a counter definition (or resolutional analysis) to the negative’s point. The entire premise of the negative case is based on what the government has an obligation to provide. As the affirmative, you may want to somewhat appeal to emotion with how much need there is in the world, and why it would be selfish to focus only on our own country.

**Value of National Welfare:** How should the government go about promoting the national welfare of citizens? Often times, government’s power and regulation must increase, which will likely not be a popular idea among the conservative homeschool community.

**Criterion of Stability:** Would not more stability be achieved through promoting peace throughout the world, instead of just one’s own country? As the affirmative, you can argue that more stability is achieved by mitigating international conflicts.

**Contention 1:** This is the strongest link in the case. It will be a major point in your advantage if you can show how it is not a moral obligation to promote national welfare, but it will be hard to do. Instead, try to show possible flaws with national welfare in and of itself (as mentioned in the attack of the value above).

**Contention 2:** First, you can lessen the impact of the foreign aid application by explaining that providing foreign aid is not the only way to mitigate international conflicts. Additionally, just because there is a possibility that money might land in the hands of the oppressive dictator does not mean that we do not have a moral obligation to find an alternative route to help the oppressed people of that country.

**Contention 3:**

**Sub-point A)** The fact that the US has economic problems does not mean that there is no moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts. Both can be moral obligations, so this does not necessarily disprove the resolution.

**Sub-point B)** By mitigating some international conflicts, the United States can proactively protect itself.

Why Risk It?   
Mitigation’s Effect on National Security

by Elizabeth Jacobs

It is easy to look at evil men and express our deep rage at dinner table conversations. We claim that such evil should be cast out by the great power of our country. We never stop to see the progression to that evil. We ignore the signs that point to the truth that our actions have consequences. Those consequences are sometimes the evil we feel so strongly about.

This kind of irresponsible thinking is why I stand in opposition to the resolution.

For clarity in today’s debate round I present the following definitions.

**Mitigate:** *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* “to cause to become less harsh or hostile.”[[148]](#footnote-148)

**Conflicts:** *Collins Dictionary,* “a state of opposition between ideas, interest, etc; disagreement or controversy.”[[149]](#footnote-149)

To provide an external weighing mechanism I present the **value** of **National Security.** National Security is operationally defined as “maintaining survival of the state through economic, military and political means.” This value best represents the resolution for the following reason to prefer

**Reason To Prefer: *Foundational US Principle***: After the Constitution was formed the United States was still deeply in debt. The reason we came out of that hardship, as the great power we are today, is that we ensured national security before taking on the struggles of the international world. National Security is a basic principle the United States will always hold.

It is obvious that national security is paramount for a government to function. What happens when the government sees mitigation as a moral obligation? National Security is greatly compromised as seen in the following contention with three applications.

**Contention) Mitigation Damages National Security**

**Application 1: *Saddam Hussein*** 300,000 Iraqi citizens vanished during Saddam Hussein’s rule. These people were brutally tortured by Saddam because he believed they were a threat.[[150]](#footnote-150) What most people don’t realize is that the United States aided Saddam to power.

Said Aburish, a specialist on Saddam Hussein, said.“The visits to the American embassy by Saddam Hussein and other members of the Ba'ath Party had one purpose, and one purpose only: to cooperate with the Americans towards the overthrow of General Kassem in Iraq. Kassem was slightly pro-communist and the Americans wanted to get rid of that danger. Allen Dulles described Iraq as the most dangerous part of the earth in front of a congressional committee. The Ba'ath thought Kassem was their enemy, so there was mutuality there.[[151]](#footnote-151)

The United States put its own safety in danger by helping a mass murderer to a position of influence.

**Application 2: *Cambodia:*** Two million Cambodians died as a result of Pol Pot’s policies and the actions of the Khmer Rouge.[[152]](#footnote-152) This regime would most likely have *never* come into power without U.S. intervention.

From Professor Jean Bricmont,“it is most unlikely that the Khmer Rouge would ever have taken power in Cambodia without the massive “secret” US bombing followed by US-engineered regime change that left that unfortunate country totally disrupted and destabilized.”[[153]](#footnote-153)

**Application 3: *Kosovo Conflict:*** Kosovo was a wreck before the US intervened, but after, both the US and Kosovo were far more damaged.

David Gibbs, an expert on diplomatic intervention observed, “The most disturbing aspect of the Kosovo case is that a purported humanitarian intervention served mainly to increase the scale of atrocities. In this respect, the Kosovo war has much in common with the 2003 Iraq invasion, which also was sold to the public (in part) as a humanitarian effort to "save" the Iraqi people from a violent dictator. In retrospect, however, it seems likely that the invasion caused as many or possibly more deaths than the total number killed by Saddam Hussein. The main lesson of the Kosovo and Iraq experiences is that military actions -- whether we call them "humanitarian" or not -- retain the potential to increase human misery.”[[154]](#footnote-154)

Involvement in Kosovo also punctured American stability.

Former member of the British Diplomatic Service, Jonathon Clark, noted during this during the conflict,“Advocates and opponents of the Kosovo war can agree that, for every day that the war continues and the mistakes multiply, the geostrategic damage to the U.S. grows exponentially. The hemorrhage to the United States’ moral credibility is palpable.”[[155]](#footnote-155)

The United States has a proud legacy or rising from the ashes. That is compromised when our government disregards national security and meddles in conflicts. Our government most definitely has a powerful role to play internationally, but they are not obligated to do so. The Cato Institute’s Barbara Conry put it wonderfully…

“In reality, U.S. military intervention is generally not a viable solution to regional conflicts and should not be undertaken except in the rare instances in which American national security is at stake. In most cases regional conflicts cannot be helped--and may well be exacerbated--by the intervention of outside parties.”[[156]](#footnote-156)

Affirmative Brief against Negative Case “Why Risk It?”

by Elizabeth Jacobs

**General Concept:**

This case is very based in the applications. The applications are broad enough that even if you dismantle the value of national security the negative applications can still have enormous impact. The key is to take those down.

**Value:**

Fight the value if you feel it is a threat to you, but honestly this case doesn’t hold impact in the value. It still is a good idea to get it off the flow. I would outweigh it with your value. If you are running the value of natural rights, then run a response like *foundational principle*. Explain how, national security is great, but it is meaningless without respect for basic rights. You can do the same thing with human dignity, human rights, or really any happy fluffy value.

**Applications:**

**1) Saddam Hussein:** This is a great application, which is why I chose it! The best response would be to turn it. Discuss how we didn’t directly put him in power, more importantly, as soon as his actions became a threat we intervened. We had a moral obligation to intervene in fact because of him. Take this application to its logical end and it becomes unimportant to the round.

**2) Cambodia:** This application is also great, as with any application-centric case, the applications have a lot of impact. However, this has a lovely turn hidden in it. When we hear the United States indirectly helped and supported Pol Pot we are outraged. It is a huge black mark on U.S. foreign intervention. Why? Because *we have a moral obligation to mitigate conflicts.* Our policies made Pol Pot’s atrocities easier and that is revolting. If you have the value of human rights, have a blast.

**3) Kosovo:** Counter-warrant and talk about what would have happened if the U.S. didn’t intervene. Kosovo was experiencing major human rights abuses. Our government intervening was the best thing for the region. This is a weaker response than the other two, but at this point this is the only thing going for the negative.

The Legitimation of Negation

by Benjamin Griffith

The founding documents of our great nation make the purpose of the United States government abundantly clear. Our government exists solely to secure our rights, to establish justice, to insure domestic tranquility, to provide for the common defense, to promote the general welfare, and to secure the Blessing of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

The United States government must protect the citizens within the nation. Beyond this responsibility, the United States has no moral obligation. It is for this reason that I emphatically oppose the resolution that the United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts.

**Definitions (if necessary)**

In order to ensure clarity, the **United States** will refer to “The executive and legislative and judicial branches of the federal government of the United States”[[157]](#footnote-157)

A **moral obligation** will be a binding promise, contract, or sense of duty based on principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong.[[158]](#footnote-158)

To **mitigate**will be to “lessen in force or intensity, ~~as wrath, grief, harshness, or pain;~~ [to] moderate.”[[159]](#footnote-159)

Finally, **international conflicts** will refer to all “conflicts between two or more nations”[[160]](#footnote-160)

**Resolutional Analysis**

Before giving you my supporting contentions, I want to provide some resolutional analysis. Today, my opponent, as the affirmative debater, has the burden of supporting the resolution that the United States has a moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts. Notice that the direct object of the resolution, “international conflicts” has no quantifier. In other words, the resolution does not indicate any specific individual international conflict or group of international conflicts which the United States is morally obliged to mitigate. If a term is not accompanied by a quantifier, we assume universal distribution. This means that when we look at this resolution, we should read it, “The United States has a moral obligation to mitigate ***all*** international conflicts.”

Today, the affirmative will attempt to prove to you that the United States should play a role in the mitigation of all international conflicts. I will oppose this claim.

**Value**

When looking at the United States involvement in international conflicts, the goal of insuring domestic tranquility must be at the forefront of our minds. Therefore, I will champion the value of **domestic tranquility**. Domestic tranquility can be defined as, “internal peacefulness; lack of disturbance within a country.”[[161]](#footnote-161) When it comes to peace, the United States’ only moral obligation is to insure tranquility *domestically.* The United States is justified in mitigating an international conflict *only* when American domestic tranquility is jeopardized.

With my resolutional analysis and value in mind, let’s look at a couple supporting contentions.

**Contention 1: Domestic Tranquility is the Paramount Goal of Government**

The United States has a moral obligation to insure domestic tranquility. When an international conflict hinders the government’s ability to keep American’s at peace, the United States must mitigate that conflict.

The United States remains involved in the international conflict between North Korea and South Korea because of North Korea’s expressed intention of targeting the United States with nuclear weaponry.[[162]](#footnote-162) Regardless of the legitimacy of these claims by North Korean dictator, Kim Jong Un, they take away from the insurance of domestic tranquility within the borders of the United States. This gives the United States a moral obligation to mitigate the conflict.

When looking at the United States’ moral obligations, we must consider the paramount goal of government: insuring domestic tranquility.

**Contention 2: An Excess of International Conflict Mitigation Jeopardizes Domestic Tranquility**

When the United States makes unnecessary attempts to mitigate international conflicts that pose threat to domestic tranquility, it disturbs peace within America.

While the United States was heavily involved in the Korean War, France was losing control of Vietnam. In 1954, France withdrew from Vietnam and the country was divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam along the seventeenth latitudinal parallel.[[163]](#footnote-163) When tensions escalated between the communist North and the democratic South in 1965, the United States sent military aid to South Vietnam and the Vietnam War began. The United States chose to mitigate this international conflict with the intention of preventing the spread of communism. There was no posed threat to domestic tranquility in America. The war was brutal and unsuccessful. The United States government implemented a military draft which blatantly disturbed domestic tranquility. As more and more Americans were sent overseas and more and more soldiers lost their lives in Vietnam, protests and domestic disturbances erupted across the United States.[[164]](#footnote-164) By the end of the war in 1975, an estimated 58,000 Americans had lost their lives.[[165]](#footnote-165) Altogether, there were an estimated 1.5 million military casualties and 4 million civilian casualties from both sides.[[166]](#footnote-166)

Today we’ve seen that the United States sole moral obligation is to insure domestic tranquility. When we mitigate conflicts unnecessarily, we sacrifice the security of our nation.

Addendum for Negative Case “The Legitimization of Mitigation”

by Benjamin Griffith

1) Use this case against affirmative cases that define or refer to the United States as the government of the United States. It is not designed to refute affirmative cases about the moral obligations of citizens, communities, or businesses within the United States.

2) The negative definitions should only be read if there are problems with the affirmative definitions. If you have no objection to your opponent’s definitions, move on. Time is ticking!

3) The resolutional analysis of this case uses formal logic to show the necessary universal distribution of the term, “international conflicts.” Make sure you read through and understand the resolutional analysis before jumping into the round. Have fun!

Affirmative Brief against Negative Case “The Legitimization of Mitigation”

by Benjamin Griffith

**Value**

1. Domestic tranquility sounds like a good thing. But what is it? “Internal peacefulness” and “lack of disturbance” doesn’t really provide a solid explanation of the value. There will always be American citizens who are disturbed or not at peace as a result of governmental decisions. It is unrealistic to evaluate our governmental policy on whether or not it “insures domestic tranquility.”
2. This case conveniently focuses on ONE tenet of the United States preamble of the constitution. There is nothing within the documents or philosophies of the founding fathers that establishes domestic tranquility as the utmost paramount goal of government. You could easily show the equal importance of establishing justice. If the United States has a moral obligation to establish justice, then injustice in Vietnam or any other nation is warrant for mitigation.

**Resolutional Analysis**

You could turn the grammatical resolutional analysis by focusing on the first part of the resolution: “The United States has **a** moral obligation…” You might argue that the resolution is referring to a specific moral obligation to mitigate international conflicts and can, therefore, refer to specific international conflicts. Otherwise, just argue that all international conflicts do, at some level, threaten the protection of your value. If it threatens your value, it must be mitigated.

**Contention 1**

Apply the example of the North Korea-South Korea conflict mitigation to your value. Show how the protection of your value is the basis for the moral obligation for the United States to get involved.

**Contention 2**

1) Show how the Vietnamese conflict jeopardized your value and even domestic tranquility. After World War II, western, democratic countries were very concerned about the spread of communism and its potential effect on the beliefs of citizens within their own countries. Had communism spread too quickly and vastly, domestic tranquility within the United States could have been harmed.

2) Failure doesn’t necessarily disprove the affirmation that the United States has a *moral obligation* to mitigate conflicts. You should argue that, while the United States was unsuccessful in its mitigation of the international conflict in Vietnam, it rightfully acted on its moral obligation to get involved.

Morally Good, Not Morally Obligatory

by Nick Harrington

This debate is not about whether or not it’s good to assist other nation because frankly that’s not a debate, that’s a fact. However, by unpacking the word “obligation” and truly understanding its meaning, we can see that the resolution is actually making a much more extreme and incorrect statement then it originally seems.

My value in today’s round is that of Human Rights. Human rights are foundational to any just or moral society that claims to cherish human beings, and because of that they should be our focus for this round.

**C1) Morally good does not mean morally obligatory**

There's a crucial difference between things that are morally good and morally obligatory. If something is morally good then that simply means that it’s a moral thing to do. If something is morally obligatory, then that means that it is the MOST moral thing to do and that you MUST do it. So helping poor people for example is morally good, but not morally obligatory, because it would be perfectly fine to spend your time and energy helping those who are sick or oppressed instead. Since there are several equally good things to do with your limited resources, you are not obligated to do any one in particular. Whereas if you see someone drowning then there is only one morally right thing to do and that’s to save them. So in order to uphold his burden, my opponent must do more than simply show that it’s good to help other nations; he must show that it is the *highest* good that the US could obtain and that we are bound to uphold it. And that simply isn’t true.

**C2) Mitigating conflicts is not the highest good**

Unfortunately, our resources are limited and we can’t help everyone, so we need to make sure that when we do give humanitarian aid, it’s going to those who truly need it. While mitigating international conflicts is sometimes beneficial, there are much more pressing issues at hand.

Take human trafficking for example. This atrocious institution continues to thrive today and the millions[[167]](#footnote-167) of men, women, and children enslaved deserve deliverance.

Or look at poverty and disease around the world. Millions of people lack proper nourishment or access to clean water and the number of deaths from preventable diseases is staggering. Around 2.2 million children alone die each year because they are not immunized[[168]](#footnote-168). That is more than 60 times the number of people who were killed in every single international conflict in 2012.[[169]](#footnote-169)\*

If the US is going to spend its resources on humanitarian projects, then alleviating suffering in these areas is far more important than worrying about international conflicts. Therefore, since there is no reason to focus on ending conflicts, as opposed to other areas, we are not obligated to do so. In fact, if we did not mitigate any international conflicts, but instead ended human trafficking, then we would be doing upholding human rights quite well.

**C3) Mitigating conflicts isn’t always right**

Another reason why the US is not obligated to mitigate international conflicts is because we are not bound to do so. Obligations must always be fulfilled, yet there are many conflicts where US involvement has not only cost American lives but has actually made the problem worse.

Take our intervention in Kosovo for example. Although intended to quell the fighting, the bombings carried out by NATO and the US actually intensified the conflict, creating even more of a refugee crisis then there already was as hundreds of thousands of people fled from their home country. In fact, one refugee camp was even accidentally bombed by those who were trying in vain to help.

Once again, I am not saying that we should never intervene or help other nations; sometimes that is absolutely the right choice. I am simply showing that in order to protect human rights there are some conflicts that we should stay out of. So in closing, is mitigating international conflicts morally good? Yes. Is it morally obligatory? Are we bound to do so over and above every other noble goal? Absolutely not.

Affirmative Brief against Negative Case “Morally Good, not Morally Obligatory”

By Nick Harrington

If you’re debating my case then the most important thing to address is my

contention 1 because if the negative can successfully lay the foundation that in order for the aff to win they must show that mitigating international conflicts is the HIGHEST good, you’ll lose. That interpretation is actually reasonably accurate as far as I know however you can still appeal to how the judge has heard the word used to show that your opponent’s interpretation is not real world.

1) You should say that if obligation mean the HIGHEST moral good then, since only one thing that can be the highest, we really only have one moral obligation which doesn’t make much sense. (That obligation would be to serve God but refrain from bringing God into the round. The point is just that we use the word obligation in regards to many different moral rules but by the neg’s interpretation, it should only ever be used of one rule.) Also, use examples of things that we are obviously obligated to do, but that aren’t the highest good. For instance we inherently know that we have an obligation to tell the truth, if we didn’t, then why would we? We tell the truth not because it’s one good thing we could do if we feel like it, but because we should and are *obligated* to do so. That doesn’t therefore mean that telling the truth is the HIGHEST good, simply that it’s something we should do. That’s all an obligation is. The neg’s interpretation is extreme and out of touch with reality.

2) We also know that obligations can conflict with each other. People have an obligation to their boss/job, it’s not optional whether or not they come into work, but they also have an obligation to their families. Those can and do conflict. However, the fact that those obligations conflict does not mean that they’re not both obligations. Both are responsibilities that people must balance.

So if you can successfully take out that contention and show that the neg’s interpretation is not real world (be sure not to spend too much time on it though! Squabbles over what words mean are pretty boring) then that takes out the contention 2 as well. Don’t argue about whether or not stopping human trafficking is better then ending international conflicts, that doesn’t matter, if you take out the contention 1 and prove that obligations can be conflicting then you can have an obligation to *both* end human trafficking and to mitigate international conflicts. All those contention 2 applications are now worthless.

The third contention is a lot weaker because the Kosovo application is very debatable. True, the actions of NATO and the US may have intensified the fighting, but we did bring the war to an end. Who knows how long it would have raged on without us? Also, even if it was a mistake or if we intervened in an irresponsible way, that has absolutely no impact on the round. If a doctor tries to save someone’s life but accidentally kills them, that doesn’t mean the doctor didn’t have an obligation to save his patients life, it just means that he should have gone about it in a different way. So in the same way, at most all this application shows is that we make mistakes and that we should have used a better method to help out in Kosovo, but that doesn’t mean that we should have sat idly by and done nothing. The fact that we may have made a mistake does not negate the fact that we did have an obligation to intervene.

Government of the People: The Social Contract as Government’s Moral Obligation

by Matthew Erickson

“Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”[[170]](#footnote-170) We don’t remember these words from Abraham Lincoln simply because they sound nice. We don’t even remember these words because they were spoken at one of the most important junctures of American History. We remember them because they embody a timeless concept that is the core of political philosophy: government’s first obligation is to its citizens, via the unspoken social contract that exists in every legitimate government. It is because I believe that the Social Contract, not international conflict, is the source of a government’s moral obligations, I stand opposed to this resolution.

**Definitions:**

**Moral**: “Of, pertaining to, or concerned with the principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong.” [[171]](#footnote-171)

**Obligation**: “something by which a person is bound or obliged to do certain things, and which arises out of a sense of duty or results from custom, law”[[172]](#footnote-172)

**Mitigate**: “to cause to become less harsh or hostile: mollify[[173]](#footnote-173)” (Merriam Webster)

**International: “**Of, relating to, or involving two or more nations[[174]](#footnote-174)” (The American Heritage Dictionary)

**Conflict**: “A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash[[175]](#footnote-175).” (The American Heritage Dictionary)

**Meta-Framework: Moral Obligation requires Agency**

We all intuitively know that we don’t have a moral obligation to assist everyone in the world. Beyond the fact that it is impractical to believe that I, as an individual, am immoral if I don’t feed someone in Bangladesh, it is obvious that we must have some sort of relationship with the person in question. This idea of relationships defining our moral obligations is known as “agent centered” moral theory.

An example of what this looks like in the real world is discussed in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’s article “Deontological Ethics”. Using a parent-child relationship as an example, the author writes “Each parent~~, for example,~~ is commonly thought to have ~~such~~ special obligations to his/her child, obligations not shared by anyone else.” Thus, when considering whether an individual or a government has a moral obligation to do something, we need to look at whether or not they have a formal relationship with the person or persons in question. If not, it is unreasonable to say they are immoral for not acting.

**Value: The Social Contract**

Before we can address the resolution, we must answer one fundamental question: what defines a government’s moral obligations? I believe there is only one answer: The Social Contract. The Social Contract is defined as “An actual or hypothetical agreement among the members of an organized society or between a community and it’s ruler that defines and limits the rights and duties of each.” (Merriam-Webster).

While there are many different social contract theories out there, there is one core concept that I am valuing today: a government’s moral obligations stem from the trust and authority its people have given it.

The reason the Social Contract should be used as an external measure for the resolution is:

**Value Link: The Social Contract Defines Government’s Moral Obligations**

The Social Contract simply takes the idea of agency and applies it to governments. Because a government’s main relationship is between itself and its citizens, its moral obligations all stem from its responsibility to use its power to benefit them.

**Contention 1: Mitigating Every International Conflict Harms the People**

Let me be clear; the government does have an obligation to mitigate some international conflicts, but only if its involvement would better uphold the social contract by promoting its citizens’ interests. However, the resolution doesn’t state that the United States has a moral obligation to mitigate only those international conflicts it judges are in its interests. The resolution is absolute. By affirming the resolution, we would be saying that it is immoral for governments to not get involved.

**Application: Switzerland**

A great example of a nation that was not immoral for staying neutral during an international conflict is Switzerland. During World War Two, many countries were in need of military aid. Yet, Switzerland chose not to get involved because they knew Germany would have overrun them, and they would have been subjugated to the horrors of Nazi occupation. Did their neutrality make them violators of a moral obligation? Did they break any moral obligations by not trying to mitigate the largest international conflict in human history? No. It would have been nice for the Allies to have a Switzerland as a friend, but their inaction did not make them immoral. Just like Switzerland, all nations first have an obligation to uphold the Social Contract with their citizens, even if that means not getting involved in an international conflict.

In conclusion, we have seen that people have a moral obligation to those within their agency, or those they have relationships with. Just like parents have a moral obligation to feed their children and not the children of others, governments have a moral obligation to protect the interests of their citizens first. Because affirming this resolution would be counter to this idea of the Social Contract, I urge you to negate it.

Affirmative Brief against Negative Case “Government of the People”

by Matthew Erickson

The case’s entire thesis stems from the meta-framework. To defeat the case, you need to offer some other framework for how to determine moral obligations, or somehow show how it is within the United States’ “agency” to mitigate every international conflict. For example, you could argue that we have a moral obligation to help people we don’t know. If someone on the street is about to be hit by a car, are you morally obliged to let them know? If it were me about to be hit by a car, I hope your answer would be yes.

Second, one could argue that every international conflict affects the people of the United States in one way or another, and thus our government is obliged to mitigate it. I predict many affirmatives will use this idea in the next year.

Lastly, notice the Resolutional Analysis hidden in contention one that states that the resolution is absolute. Good affirmatives will find a way to work around this, probably by saying something like “Not every conflict is international”, or some other clever dodge.

Making the Right Decision

by Joshua Tey

Life is full of choices – and as every kid eventually learns, it’s important to make the right decision. Unfortunately, making the moral choice isn’t always easy, because life is not a game, and there are no detailed rulebooks or instruction manuals that lay out the proper course of action for every situation in precise detail. Thus, it’s important that we take every situation on a case by case basis. The same applies to the United States’ decision to mitigate international affairs. When looking at American involvement in current international affairs, we have to weigh each situation carefully before making a decision. Because the best decision for American involvement in current international conflicts is to abstain, I believe the United States has a moral obligation to *not* intervene. First, one point of resolutional analysis.

a. Moral decisions are based on circumstances. In order to determine the best moral course of action, we can’t simply prescribe a one size fits all solution. To obtain liberty, life must sometimes be given up. Yet other times life is absolute. It simply depends on the situation.

Value: The Right Choice. – Because morality is an extremely broad concept with roots ranging from John Locke to Scripture, I won’t attempt to appear an expert on all things moral. Rather, my goal is to prove to you that in current situations, common sense would dictate that the right moral choice is overwhelmingly against intervention in foreign affairs. My criterion is the best possible outcome, in regards to benefits to human rights, national defense, and the general wellbeing of people – ultimately decided by you as the judge. In regards to intervention, we’ll see in the following contention that the best possible outcome will result from a lack of mitigation.

**Contention 1: Non-Intervention is best.**

Simply put, for all parties involved, non-intervention on the US’ part is the best course of action, demonstrated in two arenas.

**a. United States.** Currently, is in 17 trillion dollars of debt and rising[[176]](#footnote-176), the United States is in no position to fund military expeditions or provide significant aid to many other countries, because historically such intervention has incurred high costs. Most recently, the cost of the decade long war in Afghanistan cost over half a trillion, while the cost of the war in Iraq cost nearly one trillion, according to costofwar.com. In fact, because of the extensive deficit, the US defense budget is facing significant cuts, which poses a tremendous threat to national security – in fact, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta labeled these cuts as “disastrous” and “devastating.”[[177]](#footnote-177) Ironically, other top officials have said the cuts will also reduce our ability to go to war. If we increase our foreign involvement which raises the deficit and cuts the military budget, we’ll be inadvertently decreasing our foreign presence. The affirmative works against itself.

b. **International affairs.** Historically, US intervention is not only costly, but it often ends up harming foreign nations. Take the Vietnam war. Largely because of indiscriminate bombing and poor decision making on the part of America, over 2.5-4 million people were killed, most of whom were Vietnamese civilians caught in the crossfire. In addition, the war also plunged both countries into heavy debt, and in the case of Vietnam, severe damage to its economic infrastructure[[178]](#footnote-178). Now I am not suggesting that every war in the future will mirror the failed effort in Vietnam – but because of the high risk involved and the current situation of the United States, the moral choice right now is to strengthen America’s economy and defense before even considering the mitigation of international conflicts.

Affirmative Brief against Negative Case “Making the Right Decision”

By Joshua Tey

Some disclaimers: This case is not an air-tight, foolproof, impenetrable case that will win NITOC for you. Rather, it’s designed to explore the concept of morality and attack the affirmative using a unique approach. It’s definitely a competition worthy case that can work successfully if you take a bit of time to research and understand the issues, though. Let’s break it down though, and figure out the weak points.

The case is very analysis heavy on the value and the framework. Essentially, there are two extremes to morality. There’s the view that morality is an unalterable code that uncompromisingly is followed in every situation. Personally, I hold to this view. The difficulty lies in the fact that this sort of moral code ultimately has to be rooted in some higher power. Since I’m a Christian, my view of the source of moral standards is incompatible with STOA debate. We’re then left with this amorphous concept called “Natural Law,” which, no matter how you slice and dice it, is vague (The only reason the concept of natural law works is because of the inherent bias of the league.) On the other end of the spectrum is a sort of utilitarian view, which follows “pragmatic ethics” and approaches situations using their own judgment. Such a view is quite relativistic. The idea of this case is to strike a middle stance in between. While there are objective moral codes in the world, there are *far* too many for us to delve into every area of morality in forty minutes. Instead, we should attack every situation on its own merit and discuss the moral ramifications of the different individual situations. Essentially, we’re saying “In this short round, we shouldn’t waste time squabbling over the different nitpicky details of morality. We should establish a baseline mutual understanding – life is good, national security is good, human rights are good - now let’s get to the actual issues.” The virtue of this sort of approach is that you open the table for a much more interesting discussion that covers a far broader range of issues. In addition, it’s likely that you will be able to encapsulate your arguments against the affirmative value by simply subsuming their value into morality. Then, you leave more time for addressing their other contentions and applications, whereas they’ll most likely have to still address the odd resolutional approach. The danger is that if the judge says they’re expecting a very heavy specific value clash, they might not buy it. In order attack the case effectively then, you’ll need to hammer the framework. Since the case relies heavily on a somewhat ambiguous criterion, the best way to attack it is to emphasize the specificity of your own value and framework. Use the illustration of a measuring stick, and say that we have to understand the units we’re using, otherwise we’ll get nowhere. In a way, you can use the moral high ground against the case.

Moving down to the contention – the goal of the case is to have just barely enough to sufficiently support the extensive framework at the top, leaving maximum coverage on the affirmative case. This is where your own research comes in. It’s incredibly important that you build an extensive collection of briefs on common applications so that you’re able to turn them and further support your own case using the affirmative’s own applications. Turns are essential to this case, as they will provide the additional support that you don’t have time for. If you are going to refute the affirmative anyway, why don’t you just turn his evidence into support for your own case, effectively killing two birds with a single stone? The turned applications almost form an implied c. point under the contention. The particular weakness of this is that some judges might not be able to draw the link between the affirmative’s examples and the support of the negative case, so it’s imperative to establish a very clear link between their examples and your case. You might even add a c. point in your case, tag the three examples you will turn and then say you’ll get to them once you start on the affirmative.

That’s how you support the case – but when you refute the bottom half of the case, you can really capitalize on the apparent lack of heavy support, since the case is so top heavy. There are only a couple of applications that you’ll need to worry about. Let’s start with the US deficit. The cuts to the military don’t only cut national defense – they also impact foreign US military operations. Thus, when we say that the cuts are bad, you can attempt to turn this by stating that the reason they’re harmful is not only because they lessen our security, but also international justice. In regards to the fact that foreign wars increase deficit and harm foreign countries as well, you can argue that the Vietnam War is an exception – as a general rule, wars have historically helped the general state of international justice *and* benefited our economy. America was kicked out of the Great Depression by one of the largest international conflicts of all time, and I doubt many would argue that it would have been better to let Hitler and the Japanese take over rather than American interference.

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