Statism   
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Affirmative Case by Travis Herche



This case runs an extremely aggressive value, then defends it with five sub-points. The contentions are an after-thought. If the judge accepts your value, you are nearly guaranteed to win the round.

This case debuts a new kind of argument: the value analysis. This is a defensive argument that clarifies and preempts arguments against a value, whereas a value link is an offensive argument explaining why your value is good. The value analyses are critical to fortify against the most obvious negative lines of attack, but don’t get too tangled up in them. If they succeed, all they do is get the judge to a neutral place on statism. They don’t actually push toward victory.

That means the real heroes of this case are your value links. Don’t shy away from being the champion of big government. Go on offense talking about all the great things government does. Demand to know how your opponent, who is presumably anti-statist, would deliver those benefits.

Avoid contention debate. You win your contentions; your opponents win theirs. Get to the value debate as quick as you can and stay there as long as you can.

Don’t run this case out-of-the-box. Do your research. Read about all the countries mentioned; learn about Nazism and state capitalism and Reaganomics. You should be able to have an intelligent conversation about anything in this case. Your opponent will push for details in cross-examination.

The opposite of statism is anarchy.

While they aren’t extremists, Republicans have a history of environmental protection, too. Republican presidents created the National Park Service,[[1]](#footnote-1) the Environmental Protection Agency,[[2]](#footnote-2) and cap-and-trade.[[3]](#footnote-3) In fact, “conservationism” and “conservatism” have the same root meanings.

Statism

The Hoover Dam is an American icon. It towers 72 stories high over the Colorado River, and each second, enough water flows through it to fill fifteen swimming pools. At full power, the dam generates electricity sufficient for all of Seattle.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Hoover Dam is a tribute to American ingenuity and the power of cooperation. It’s the kind of thing we can achieve when we are “Resolved: the needs of the public ought to be valued above private property rights.”

# Value: Statism

Statism is defined by Oxford Living Dictionaries as: “A political system in which the state has substantial centralized control over social and economic affairs.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Statism is rooted in the time-tested philosophy that the supreme good is society, not the individual. I’m about to offer five sub-points explaining why this makes for a good value. The first three help us clear out misconsceptions about Statism. They are called Value Analyses.

## Value Analysis 1: Innocent

Unfortunately, statism has a sullied reputation because of several famous failures in the last century. Let’s talk about them.

Nazi Germany was statist, but that isn’t what killed it. Rather, it was a poisonous cocktail of dozens of twisted ideas like racism and eugenic theory.

Maoist China was statist, but that isn’t what killed it. Rather, it was corruption, old-school communism, and famine.

Soviet Russia was statist, but that isn’t what killed it. Rather, it was bureaucratic incompetence, hegemony, and a dysfunctional legal system.

Statism gets blamed for a lot, but we could just as well conclude that countries fail when they have red in their flags – which all those countries did. Or countries fail when they are ruled by men. Or when many of their citizens eat meat. That would be silly, of course.

Countries suffer when bad values like racism take root. If the government is powerful, the government expresses those bad values. If not, the people do it on their own. Either way, statism is not to blame for the consequences of bad ideas.

## Value Analysis 2: Widespread

Statism is practiced in one form or another by every successful country in the world. Judicious use of government is seen in the powerful American military; in Australia’s world-class infrastructure; in Switzerland’s welfare programs; in Norway’s school system. Even Singapore, ranked second-freest country in the world by the Heritage Foundation,[[6]](#footnote-6) practices state capitalism, where the government owns controlling shares in many private corporations and owns nearly all housing.

## Value Analysis 3: Pluralistic

Statism doesn’t mean stripping people of their liberties. It still has freedom of speech, due process, democratic elections, and so on. While we may disagree over how government power should be used, most mainstream political parties in America favor statism.

Republicans want to use government power to control immigration, drugs, stem cell research, and terrorism.

Democrats want to use government power to provide low-cost education and medical care, regulate how workers are paid and treated, and offer social safety nets.

Greens want to use government power to limit pollution and climate change.

Members of the Constitution Party want to use government power to enforce traditional values on marriage and abortion.

Even Libertarians will support statist policies like public roads, fire departments, police, prisons, and at least some business laws.

So Statism is about empowering government to work. How exactly it should work is mostly beyond the scope of this debate. Everyone who isn’t an anarchist has a seat at the statist table.

I’m saying all this because I want to make sure we understand what statism is and isn’t. Don’t let my opponent scare you with holocaust stories. That is not what statism is about.

Now here’s why Statism is awesome.

## Value Link 1: Government’s Greatest Hits

Regardless of your politics, you have a lot to get excited about in this value. Here are few highlights from the proud history of American statism:

We created interstate highways and breathtaking national parks. We defeated slavery, Nazism, and communism. We rebuilt Europe and Japan following devastating wars. We built dams and power plants. We banned segregation. We ran phone and power lines almost everywhere. We drastically reduced diseases like malaria and AIDS. We landed on the moon. We created the legal framework for the internet. We assembled the finest fighting force in history. We funded breakthroughs in materials research, medicine, electronics, and manufacturing. We have an efficient public sanitation system with water treatment and sewers and trash disposal and recycling. Our food and environmental regulations keep us safe and healthy.

I don’t ask you to support Statism because you like big government. I ask you to do it because you like a good and just government – which is only possible if we work together.

## Value Link 2: Democracy in Action

Nobody really likes the government. It’s not shiny or exciting. It’s a lot easier to complain about it and blame it for our problems.

Ronald Reagan famously said in his first inaugural speech:

“government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Then he expanded welfare and gun regulations, hired hundreds of thousands of new federal employees, and signed the largest tax increase in American history. That legacy isn’t as fun as his snappy quotes, but it’s important. It teaches us that instead of whining about government, we should realize that we are the government. We should roll up our sleeves and get to work making it the best government possible.

Lawyer and amateur banjo player Daniel Cluchey wrote:

“Government is not against the people: it is the people. The laws they make are not shackles: they are “those wise restraints that make men free.” The Rand-y specter (be it Ayn or Paul) of an inhuman bureaucratic monolith in a gray trench coat coming for your job, your wallet, your independence: it’s just that — a specter. It’s us, coming to us, saying that for our country to prosper together we need to build a road, to build a dam, to raise an army, to make sure that our elderly can afford to be taken care of, to make sure that our businesses play by the rules, to make sure that we can breathe the clean air, get Americans back to work, lessen our dependence on the resources of other nations. It’s us.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Two final thoughts.

# Contention 1: Public Needs Uphold Statism

Government needs the authority to take land for public works and to enforce search warrants. Thanks to centralized power, we live in a country with interstate highways and zoned towns and the Hoover Dam.

# Contention 2: Property Rights Hinder Statism

Private property isn’t intrinsically dangerous, but it can be taken too far. It is based on the anarchist thinking that the supreme good is the individual, and that we live with no responsibilities to each other. But we don’t. We live in a society, and sometimes that society needs to take so that we all can benefit.

Every successful country in history has depended on statism to get where it is. I hope you’ll affirm that precedent. Thank you.

# Negative Notes

There are four basic roads to victory against this case.

1. **Wash the value debate.** Some negative cases get along with statism. If they do, you can accept it and push your contentions, possibly running your own value as a criterion or dual value. In so doing, you effectively erase all but the last thirty seconds of the AC. Just make absolutely sure statism can’t be used against you. For most negative cases, this approach isn’t an option.
2. **Go the obvious route.** Go head-on against the first value analysis, arguing that statism guarantees abuse of power. It requires violence and political suppression to stay in power. It enables corruption. There is no recourse when we don’t like statist policies. It puts us at the mercy of government, and at that point mass death is inescapable.

Daunting fact: there is only one major modern genocide that wasn’t perpetrated by a government on its own people. That was the Belgian genocide of Congo. The rest – China, Germany, Russia, Japan, Turkey, Cambodia, Korea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and so on – were all inside jobs. They were statist jobs. Coincidence?

1. **Do a political debate.** The AC goes to great lengths to keep you from characterizing statism as a dangerous and extremist view. If you’d rather not charge right into the carefully-prepped defenses, you can instead argue that smaller, more limited government is better. You don’t say that statism causes genocide and collapse, but you do say that it is inefficient or unfair; that it’s not as good as freedom.
2. **Go philosophical.** Read up on philosophical arguments against statism. Good starting points, in order of their likely attractiveness to your typical judge, are: natural rights, self-ownership, right-wing libertarianism, the non-aggression principle, anarchism, and political nihilism. All of those concepts make interesting negative values.

1. Teddy Roosevelt. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Richard Nixon. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. George H.W. Bush. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Enough for a city of 750,000 people, according to the US Burea of Reclamation Accessed October 15, 2016.

   <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/educate/kidfacts.html>

   Seattle has a population of 684,451. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Oxford Living Dictionaries, “Rule of Law,” Accessed October 16, 2016. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/statism [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Taken from a list. Singapore has an Overall score of 87.8/100 and a ranking of 2 on the 2016 Index of Economic Freedom. <http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ronald Reagan, “Inaugural Address,” Heritage Foundation, January 20, 1981.

   <http://www.heritage.org/initiatives/first-principles/primary-sources/reagans-first-inaugural-government-is-not-the-solution-to-our-problem-government-is-the-problem> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Daniel Cluchey, “In Defense of “Big” Government,” Huffington Post, July 28, 2010.

   <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-cluchey/in-defense-of-big-governm_b_662138.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)