Monument Red

The following are articles, affirmative and negative cases, and opposing arguments is for your study of the Lincoln-Douglas resolution that was debated during the 2012-2013 school year in the Stoa speech and debate league. Applications and citations may be outdated, so give attention to checking all hyperlinks before attempting to run in competition.

**Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.**

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Contributors

Kaitlin Nelson, Editor

Chase Harrington

Travis Herche

**Matthew Mittelberg**

Shane Baumgardner

Jon Bateman

**Ashlyn Olson**

Jesse Byrnes

**Elizabeth Ertle**

Benjamin Griffith

Cynthia Jeub

**Patrick Ortiz**

Section 1: Articles

Discussions on key terms, theories, philosophies, and applications

Understanding LD in This Year’s Resolution

1: Hello, Resolution

Getting familiar with the 2011-2012 Stoa LD Resolution

His studies were pursued

but never effectually

overtaken.

–H.G. Wells

**Dichotomy of an Endless Sort**

*Politics & Economics: The Principled Pillars of Government*

by Jesse Byrnes

**Bunny Trails**

*A Map of Contextual Argumentation*

by Jesse Byrnes

**Definitions in the Resolution**

*An Introduction to Interpretations of Key Words in the Resolution*

by Matthew Mittelberg

**CPR: Contemplating Philosophers in the Resolution**

*The “Who’s Who” of Old Dead Guys*

by Ashlyn Olson

**Personal Freedom**

*What Is This Thing, Anyway?*

by Ashlyn Olson

**Economics Stuff**

*Economics 101: Important Terms to Know*

by Shane Baumgardner, with contributions from Benjamin Griffith

Dichotomy of an Endless Sort

Politics & Economics: The Principled Pillars of Government

by Jesse Byrnes

Government. What comes to mind? Barack Obama? The Supreme Court? Roles, duties and justifications aside, "government" should, in the simplest of terms, bring to mind two things: politics and economics. When it comes to campaign promises, administrative agendas and (bi)partisan policies, everything can fall into one of those categories, if not both. Oftentimes, the two coalesce into a conglomerate of argumentation:

Should Congress debate the merits of funding for Planned Parenthood?

Is it justified to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes in order to decrease California's growing deficit?

Should the Fed and White House work more closely together when it comes to policy decisions?

Are economic bailouts justified and to whom should they be given?

Obviously, one's political stance will weigh strongly on their economic beliefs. Why is it that "conservatives" and "Christians" are oftentimes found in the same category when it comes to issues like abortion, big government and individual freedom? Political stances weigh strongly on economic beliefs. Unfortunately, the pendulum rarely swings the other way. Economic beliefs rarely weigh strongly on political stances. The reasoning is quite obvious: people (even at a young age) can relate with many political issues –– and are influenced by their parents and peers on a practical level –– though it takes a certain kind of dedication to understand economic principles and how they relate to one's political stance. Notice the words I chose: political stances and economic beliefs. People can relate with politics and form a personal stance on issues, but they are less set on their economic positions, if they have any at all.

Politics and economics are the most generic and principled pillars of government, but how do they relate in the context of this year's resolution? One interpretation is to look at this year's resolution as a springboard for debate between the two values: personal freedom (political) versus economic security (economic). One relates to the liberty of the individual to make his or her own decisions in the political realm, while the other relates to the stability and prosperity of a system in the economic realm. As discussed in my other article, one could argue that –– because of the context of the resolution in terms of "economic security" –– that "personal freedom" must relate to something economical, in order for a correlation and direct conflict to occur.

But if personal freedom is not limited to the economic sector, can conflict still be found? Can politics and economics themselves conflict? Stanford economist Thomas Sowell put it, "The first law of economics is scarcity, and the first law of politics is to disregard the first law of economics."[[1]](#footnote-1) Politics and economics are closely related, though understandably separate. In this mindset concerning the resolution, one is not asking "Should individual, financial decisions be valued over the stability of the economy as a whole?" but rather, "Should personal freedom –– individual liberty, at its core –– be valued over economic security and economic decisions?"

Politics and economics can conflict on a very practical level. Right now in the United States (assuming not much has changed in the short time since this book was published), Americans are feeling pinched at the gas pumps, are battling still-high unemployment numbers and are trying to find ways to expand their businesses under present economic conditions. A fairly realistic example between politics and economics? Presidential bids for the White House in 2012. Because of the horrible economic conditions in this nation, many apt presidential candidates will likely run on platforms of economic recovery (since it would be widely accepted) as opposed to certain types of social issue like DOMA and homosexual marriage, Planned Parenthood and abortion, and medical marijuana and drug legality. Not to say that presidential candidates will not vocalize their stances on fundamental social issues, but that they will likely focus more on economic principles in their speeches and debates in order to reign-in the growing deficit, jobless numbers, and the likelihood for yet another dip into recession. Should the next president be a notable scholar of political theories or a dedicated and successful business owner/manager? Right now does America need another celebrity for president or a fundamental economic policy guru? For Americans, this year's resolution will (hopefully) be played-out in various presidential bids between now and 2012.

Another area highlighting the difference between freedom and economic security can be seen with the size and scope of government. As Ronald Reagan put it in his farewell address in 1989, "Man is not free unless government is limited. There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts."[[2]](#footnote-2) Can a nation be successful if the government's power and responsibility is too widespread? Take tax rates in our nation and around the world: can individuals and small businesses do more if they have more funds at their disposal? Or do they have to spend more time to make up for the monetary loss due to taxes? The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, oecd.org) has compiled tax data from around the world since 1965. According to its most recent report, the highest taxed countries lie in Europe. The worst? Denmark, with a tax rate (as a percentage of GDP) of 48.2 percent.[[3]](#footnote-3) More "economic security" via taxation leads to a decline in personal freedom, with only two of the highest taxed nations (per rate) being in the top 20 of economically free countries, according to the Heritage Foundation's 2011 Index of Economic Security.[[4]](#footnote-4) Of course, much more than mere tax rates play into the success of a nation economically: unemployment rates, monetary and fiscal policy, deficits, and growth of GDP all play a role. For politics versus economics and liberty versus equality, tax policy walks the tightrope of an age-old problem: growth of the state or growth of the free market. One notion for policymakers to reevaluate when it comes to tax rates for businesses and individuals: can businessmen and women really do more with less?

When exploring the differences and possibilities of politics versus economics, one must examine the uniqueness and workability of each. If one were to debate the merits of life (defined as the physical property of living, breathing, etc.), would that debate be political or economic? (You might say personal, above anything else, especially if someone is holding a gun to your head.) Now someone is arguing the merits of life in the realms of abortion and the pro-life vs. pro-death debate. Would it be a political or economical debate? Between the two, definitely political –– if not moral. Now the debate centers around the issue of funding abortion clinics, specifically Planned Parenthood. Political much? But also economic. The debates shifts once again to the merits of defunding dozens of organizations (Planned Parenthood included) in order to reign-in the deficit. The argumentation has evolved from one purely moral and political to one largely practical and economical. Closely related, but different. Issues of government funding, budgeting and regulating can quickly turn tricky situations into sticky situations since money goes to things that are valued highest, with a great number of people not valuing many government endeavors at all. As Charles Spurgeon put it, "Economy is half the battle of life; it is not so hard to earn money as to spend it well."[[5]](#footnote-5) True both individually and collectively. The uniqueness and workability of politics and economics must be realized in order for a society to advance while maintaining its principles.

As with any type of system, political and economic frameworks define certain classes and groups of individuals. Consequently, because of the specific framework, individuals and groups will fall into those certain classes based on what they contribute or take away (benefit) from that society and subsequent economy. Most Americans are familiar with the class system in the United States: people fall into the upper, middle, and lower classes. The upper class consists of successful, educated, wealthy individuals; the middle consists of "average" Americans –– hard-working, enduring, innovative individuals; the lower class includes underprivileged, uneducated, poverty-stricken individuals.

What collared shirt are you wearing at the moment? As you enter into a career, you will likely fall into either a white-collar or blue-collar position (or the growing "green-collar" eco-division[[6]](#footnote-6)), further exemplifying our society's class labeling. In the tiered system that is the American economy, each of the classes function in a way to advance the economy as a whole. For example, imagine a thriving mango business, raking in hundreds of millions a year. (Oh man, if only we could write hypotheticals into reality –– I have always wanted to be in the mango business.) As a huge company, it would employ a CEO (upper-class) who could employ thousands of machine operators, warehouse workers, and managers (middle-class) who would clean, package and sell products produced by working-class individuals who picked the mangos to begin the process (lower-class).

Of course, any type of class system argumentation relies largely on whose definition of "class" is being used. Where is the line between the working class and lower class? You have to make the distinction. Should economic security be valued for both the middle class and working class? *Can* it be valued for both? Prosperous economies have a strong upper class, vibrant middle class, and shrinking lower class. As most would argue, the middle class plays a vital role, for it contains the individuals who are striving whole-heartedly toward the top and set forth goals in order to become more successful, with an increasing number of resources at their disposal. While a society may be remembered for the most influential and dominant individuals and groups, the middle class is the engine that pushes the economy forward. As Ayn Rand put it, "Upper classes are a nation's past; the middle is the future."[[7]](#footnote-7)

Individuals and groups will fall into certain classes based on what they contribute or take away from a society and subsequent economy, but can also fall into a specific societal framework based on deeper, social issues and stigmas. India continually suffers from class discrimination on a political and social level. While India's caste system is outlawed, it continues to play a role in the daily lives of average Indians[[8]](#footnote-8) (however you would define "average" in the caste model). While Americans fall into certain economic classes based on income, labor, etc., Indians continue to fall into a political/social classes based on all areas of their culture and society, including priests and the educated class, ruling and warrior class, business and trading class, and the laboring class.[[9]](#footnote-9) Even when applied to societal frameworks and systems, politics and economics can be shown to be unique. Of course, the thing about America –– compared to a nation like India, for example –– is that one can move from any class to another, for better or worse, and a person is able to define their societal status instead of having their societal status define who they are.

If you have done debate before –– whether arguing values or policies –– you will have debated certain political issues and you know that they can be understood pretty easily. As discussed earlier, individuals easily grasp personal, political issues from a young age because they are capable of seeing how it applies to themselves and/or those around them. On the contrary, many are unfamiliar with key economic terms and thus are incapable of understanding the contrast between politics and economics. As a coach, judge, and former competitor, I would encourage you to get familiar with key economic terms and use them regularly in rounds (e.g., economies of scale! supply! demand! monetary policy! fiscal policy! etc.). At the same time, a word of caution: understand terms before using them. Sure, it sounds cool to be like, "Judge! Homo economicus!" but unless you understand the ideas behind the terms your using, you are likely to be belly-upped by your opponent. Use smart words, and explain them well.

If any of the economic ideas you have found in this book or in your own research have thrown you for a loop, do not get worried or bogged-down. Economics is a tricky subject, and understanding economic systems can become laborious. If you are an extemper, you are on the right track. If you are not, well, get on board. Extemp helps you –– nay, forces you –– to learn certain economic terms and principles, grasp the inner-workings of an economy, and better understand economics in relation to politics.

Politics and economics have remained the two principled pillars of government since the beginning, though debaters must understand their differences and how the resolution applies both. When deciding if a politics versus economics approach to the resolution is one you would like to take, begin by examining the pros and cons. Regardless of your point of view and strategy, the best debaters are those capable of separating closely tied ideas in order to argue the merits of a specific value over another. Just as "an unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates), an unexamined value is not worth valuing. Understand the political and economic aspects of the resolution, and how the dichotomy can and (arguably) does exist.

Bunny Trails

*A map of contextual argumentation*

by Jesse Byrnes

*Author’s Note: If you like hiking you like good trails. Living in Colorado, there are always new places to go, adventurous trails to blaze and paths to cross. My favorite trails are the ones that bunnies frequent. Hopefully you will enjoy this one, if not learn something. In the event that you would like to fall into a bunny hole (otherwise known as a rabbit hole) as opposed to going off on a bunny trail, I suggest you read Lewis Carroll.*

A lot of times, context really is everything. Whenever you find a quote that makes a stance for or against something, it cannot hurt to go and find the quote in context to see if the meaning changes. A lot of biblical references are contentious not because the Bible is contradictory, but because someone took a quote out of context and thus views on the same subject seemed to be conflicting.

Oftentimes, context is just as important as the text of the quote itself. Etymologically, “context” means “to weave together.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Speaking to the choir for a moment, weaving together arguments in a debate round is necessary for a smooth, cohesive delivery. Similarly, weaving together the parts of the resolution –– and viewing each part in relation to the other –– can prove necessary for an effective interpretation and smart argumentation.

***Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.***

Pretty straightforward. What is more important? Your dignity and liberty, or the safety and prosperity of the nation's economy? You can define and analyze important words like “conflict, personal freedom, ought, economic security, puppies, aardvarks” and any other word you feel the need to understand. As a debater, and especially when you are negative, you can look at personal freedom and economic security as incompatible, non-conflicting ideas (e.g., one is political, the other economic) and undoubtedly find definitions to support this. But context really is everything. Asking a few basic questions without defining a single word can provide some clarity as far as what the resolution is actually requiring you to affirm or negate:

*What idea is the affirmative mandated to value, to some extent? (Personal freedom)*

*What idea(s) is the negative mandated to value? (Economic security or both)*

*Does an aff need to prove conflict exists, or just that economic security is inferior?*

*Fundamentally, is personal freedom capable of conflicting with economic security?*

*Can the affirmative prove personal freedom ought to be valued higher even if it cannot be valued higher?*

Here are a few key principles that the resolution assumes to be true:

1. It assumes personal freedom and economic security are capable of conflicting
2. It assumes personal freedom and economic security do not always conflict
3. It assumes personal freedom and economic security are different ideas
4. It assumes economic security is a fundamentally inferior value

Many of these may seem obvious, but all are key for a thorough understanding of the resolution, both contextually and realistically.

Because of the context of the resolution in terms of its latter “economic security,” one could/should look at the former “personal freedom” through the lens of personal finance and in the realms of individual financial actions that directly relate, influence, and otherwise affect the security of the economy as a whole. That is to say, personal freedom *must* be economic in its resolutional nature.

Personal freedom could be viewed as liberty, freedom of thought, expression, etc., but in the context of the resolution, one could argue that it must directly relate to functions and stability of an economy. Freedom for the individual could include everything from one's right to own a gun to one's right to purchase marijuana, but it must be limited and directly tied to actions that can influence and *conflict* with economic security. If you have your thinking cap on already, you may wonder why and/or how anyone could get off-track with rambunctious arguments concerning personal freedom considering the fact that the resolution includes "When in conflict...". Clearly, debaters can only argue personal freedom as it relates to economic security, right? One could only hope. (Realize that you will encounter numerous red herrings this year.) But even from a contextual basis you can realize that freedom and economic security *have* to relate on a fundamental level in order for conflict to be possible.

According to Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, *personal* is “relating to an individual; affecting individuals; peculiar or proper to him or her, or to private actions or character.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Webster defines *freedom* as “a state of exemption from the power or control of another; liberty; exemption from slavery, servitude or confinement,” noting that freedom can be “personal, civil, political, and religious.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Notice how the specific “personal freedom” is not tied by definition to economic security? It is because they are different ideas. But they absolutely relate, right? You will not find a definition that paints an accurate picture of “personal freedom” because no dictionary has the context of the resolution as a reference. It is the debater’s job to analyze the parts of the resolution and find definitions that support that analysis.

Looking at the problem of conflict in the light of an external value can be profitable (yes, that is what we call an understatement). As a debater, it is your responsibility to guide the judge –– and even your opponent, if you can –– through the resolution, showing them why your side and interpretation is the most accurate and why it is justified. You may not be in the forests of Colorado or on rocky terrain, but you are most definitely the one with the map. Be a good guide. Do not run off on bunny trails and lose your judges, but do show them who is boss.

**Food for Thought**

What defines your success as a debater? The awards you obtain, or the status you attain? What about the knowledge you gain? The sharpening of your brain or the rhyming you sustain?

In all seriousness –– does success depend on recognition?

I have always loved sections in publications labeled “Food for Thought”... but I have always been vastly unimpressed since they never actually talk about food. What right-minded guy does not like thinking about food? If you were an early pioneer –– or live in parts of the south today –– all this talk of bunnies would make you hungry (do not moan). So here I am, trying to not let you down.

Have you ever worked in a kitchen with several other people or watched a television show about such a scenario? Burgers are getting grilled, vegetables chopped and desserts heated. Want conflict? Look no further than a kitchen. In a kitchen, everyone has a specific duty. Cookers, cutters, washers, servers. No 5-star restaurant gets its chops (pun intended) and reputation by relying on a single individual. However, the success of a kitchen and restaurant depend on the freedom and ingenuity of each part to improvise and make sure the job gets done. Hard work and dedication are the grease that makes the machine of a kitchen run, but personal freedom is the underbelly to its success.

Want to make sure the restaurant stays economically secure? Value the individual roles of those in the kitchen and serve good, tasty food. Let the cooking begin.

For more on the topic of success, see the affirmative case “I want YOU! to be successful.”

Definitions in the Resolution

*An Introduction to Interpretations of Key Words in the Resolution*

by Matthew Mittelberg

Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

This article is meant to be a starting point for your interpretation of the terms in this resolution, as well as a source for some of the phrases that are more difficult to find definitions for. It’s not a comprehensive guide to every possible interpretation, but it’s a good place to start. I hope both the definitions and summaries will provide a framework for you to better understand the resolution.

**Conflict**

**Dictionary.com[[13]](#footnote-13)**

“to come into collision or disagreement; be contradictory, at variance, or in opposition; clash”

“a fight, battle, or struggle, especially a prolonged struggle; strife.”

“discord of action, feeling, or effect; antagonism or opposition, as of interests or principles”

“incompatibility or interference, as of one idea, desire, event, or activity with another”

**Merriam-Webster Dictionary[[14]](#footnote-14)**

“competitive or opposing action of incompatibles”

**Collins English Dictionary[[15]](#footnote-15)**

from Latin conflictus, from conflīgere “to combat,” from flīgere “to strike”

***Possible Interpretations –*** there are three primary interpretations of the word conflict.

A contradiction of ideas – this is the simplest understanding of the term, and will probably be the most common interpretation of the word.

A contradiction of action – this is an interesting interpretation, because the ideas themselves aren’t necessarily directly in conflict with each other, and you don’t need to choose one idea over the other, as long as pursuing one idea results in an action or impact that is in contradiction with the impact of pursuing the other.

War – This will be the least used and probably least accepted interpretation of the term conflict. If you’re going to use this definition, you will need some very specific and persuasive justification to do so.

**Personal freedom**

**Nelson Education[[16]](#footnote-16)**

“The absence of coercion in various aspects of life.”

**An Index of Personal and Economic Freedom[[17]](#footnote-17)**

Individual Freedom – "...the ability to dispose of one's own life, liberty, and justly acquired property however one sees fit, so long as one does not coercively infringe on another individual's ability to do the same."

**Personal**

Dictionary.com[[18]](#footnote-18)

“of, pertaining to, or coming as from a particular person; individual; private”

“intended for use by one person”

“of [the](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/the) [nature](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nature) of an individual rational being.”

“provided for one's discretionary use”

**Collins English Dictionary[[19]](#footnote-19)**

“undertaken by an individual himself”

“referring to, concerning, or involving a person's individual personality, intimate affairs, etc.”

**Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law[[20]](#footnote-20),**

“of, relating to, or affecting a person”

**Freedom**

**Dictionary.com[[21]](#footnote-21)**

“the state of being [free](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/free) or at liberty rather than in confinement or under physical restraint”

“exemption from external control, interference, regulation, etc.”

“the power to determine action without restraint.”

“personal liberty, as opposed to bondage or [slavery](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/slavery)”

“the right to enjoy all the privileges or special rights of citizenship, membership, etc., in a community or the like.”

“Synonym: liberty”

**Collins English Dictionary[[22]](#footnote-22)**

“personal liberty, as from slavery, bondage, serfdom, etc.”

“the quality or state of being free, especially to enjoy political and civil liberties”

**Frédéric Bastiat[[23]](#footnote-23):**

“And what is this liberty, whose very name makes the heart beat faster and shakes the world? Is it not the union of all liberties — liberty of conscience, of education, of association, of the press, of travel, of labor, of trade? In short, is not liberty the freedom of every person to make full use of his faculties, so long as he does not harm other persons while doing so?”

***Possible Interpretations*** – there are two primary ways of understanding personal freedom.

Unlimited freedom – this is the definition that most negative teams will probably want to use. It says that personal freedom is unrestrained anarchy that is only limited by the desires of the individual, and that this needs to be sacrificed for economic security. It’s obviously best to avoid this understanding when on the affirmative.

Limited freedom – this is the definition that most affirmative teams will want to use. Under this interpretation freedom is qualified by the understanding that you cannot violate another person’s freedom. This is the most broadly accepted definition of freedom. You can find a lot of support for this interpretation, such as the definition that I gave from Frédéric Bastiat.

**Economic security**

**Dictionarist[[24]](#footnote-24)**

“financial assurance, economic strength”

**National Public Radio[[25]](#footnote-25)**

“According to [the report](http://wowonline.org/documents/BESTIndexforTheUnitedStates2010.pdf), to achieve economic security the average minimum income needed for a family with two workers and two young children is $67,920 — that's with both parents working, and earning just over $16 an hour. And a single worker with no children needs to make about $30,000 a year, which means working full-time and earning twice the minimum wage.”

**New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade[[26]](#footnote-26)**

“Economic security can be threatened by terrorism, threats to health or potential disruptions to energy supplies.”

**International Labor Organization[[27]](#footnote-27)**

“Economic security is composed of basic social security, defined by access to basic needs infrastructure pertaining to health, education, dwelling, information, and social protection, as well as work-related security.”

**Economic**

**Dictionary.com[[28]](#footnote-28)**

“pertaining to [the](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/the) production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities.”

“involving or pertaining to one's personal resources of money”

**Collins English Dictionary[[29]](#footnote-29)**

“of or relating to an economy, economics, or finance”

“concerning or affecting material resources or welfare”

“concerned with or relating to the necessities of life; utilitarian”

**Princeton University’s Wordnet[[30]](#footnote-30)**

“of or relating to an economy, the system of production and management of material wealth”

“financially rewarding”

**Security**

**Dictionary.com[[31]](#footnote-31)**

“freedom from danger, risk, etc.; safety.”

“freedom from care, anxiety, or doubt; well-founded confidence.”

“freedom from financial cares or from want”

“precautions taken to guard against crime, attack, sabotage, espionage, etc.”

***Possible Interpretations*** – there are two primary ways of understanding of economic security.

Fluctuating security – this means that there isn’t an absolute standard for what is secure and what is not – rather any increase in money would increase economic security, and any decrease in money would decrease economic security.

Brightline security – this means there’s a specific brightline, or standard, that you’d have to cross in order to lose economic security. The brightline for a government’s financial security could be a recession, an un-payable debt, etc. The brightline for an individual could be going below the poverty line, exorbitant debt, etc.

I hope these thoughts and definitions get you started in understanding this year’s Lincoln Douglas debate resolution. I’d encourage you to read through this article several times as well as meditate on the wording of the resolution itself in order to familiarize yourself with the topic, and so you’ll be able to imagine new and creative ways to interpret it. In addition, do your own research on the terms and topics that were briefly touched on here so you can personable confident in your opinions concerning how the resolution should be understood and argued.

CPR: Contemplating Philosophers in the Resolution

The “Who’s Who” of Old Dead Guys

by Ashlyn Olson

Ahhhh!! Help!! My opponents keep throwing out names of fancy philosophers and I don’t understand what they are talking about! I think I am going to pass out….

Never fear! I am here to rescue you with CPR (aka: “Contemplating Philosophers in the Resolution”). After reading this chapter, you will be able to understand what in the world your opponent is talking about, and perhaps to strengthen your own cases and argumentations. With each philosopher, I have tried to include a quote that reflects their philosophies in order to give you a better idea of what each person stands for. As with any topic in debate, in order to fully grasp the complexities of these philosophers and their philosophies, you will have to do some research on your own. However, hopefully this will clear up some confusion, and equip you with the tools you need to dissect these age-old men…err…not dissect THEM…just their philosophies.

Personal Freedom

As with economic security, the topic of personal freedom has been discussed by many philosophers over the years. An interesting thread found among philosophers in support of personal freedom is the concept of the social contract. Many philosophers agree that personal freedom found in the state of nature can lead to harm. Therefore, it is the government’s role to limit that personal freedom, but only insofar as the people agree to the limits under the social contract.

**John Locke**

Perhaps Locke is most famous for his *Two Treatise on Civil Government*, where he championed the concept of personal freedom. Locke coined the term “the state of nature,” and argued that in order to stop the absolute, lawless freedom man naturally has, governments are instituted among men. Locke also believed that men were subject to moral law, a law that comes from God. Ultimately, Locke argued, man’s intrinsic right to freedom is derived from God, and the government should use the social contract to protect that personal freedom. [[32]](#footnote-32)

“The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom.”—John Locke [[33]](#footnote-33)

**Thomas Hobbes**

Much like Locke, Hobbes argued for the importance of a social contract. According to Hobbes, in the state of nature, man can do anything, whether peaceful or violent. He was also an advocate of natural law (found through reason), which limited the personal freedom inherent in all men. [[34]](#footnote-34)

“The right of nature…is the liberty each man hath to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life.” –Thomas Hobbes [[35]](#footnote-35)

**Thomas Paine**

We have another Thomas! Perhaps more conservative than Hobbes, Paine opposed monarchies, and argued that justified governments are those laid in the people. Paine’s philosophy is that, “Political associations are created solely to preserve these rights. The nation, as it is based upon the people, can only have rights granted to it by the people.” [[36]](#footnote-36)

**Frederic Bastiat**

Bastiat is probably best known for his book *The Law.* Although Bastiat could be considered an economist, he firmly believed in the importance of personal freedom. He argued that government’s existed to protect citizens’ freedoms. “Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that life, liberty, and property existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place.”—Frederick Bastiat [[37]](#footnote-37)

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**

Unlike Hobbes, Rousseau argued that men inherently had a sense of right and wrong in the state of nature. He believed that society corrupted the man. Rousseau definitely supported personal freedom as paramount, and something that the government should uphold.

“I prefer liberty with danger to peace with slavery.” –Jean-Jacques Rousseau [[38]](#footnote-38)

**John Rawls**

Ultimately, John Rawls championed justice. Many of his works are dedicated to analyzing how to best achieve and preserve justice. However, he did support personal freedom, and advocated freedom as an essential part of a flourishing society.

“Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.” –John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [[39]](#footnote-39)

Economic Security

Philosophers have long debated what makes a nation economically secure. What is important to note is that many philosophers in favor of economic security do not directly oppose personal freedom. Instead, they see the two working together, or simply coexisting. Much of this year’s resolution will hinge on the phrase “when in conflict,” and it will be important to outline where the two ideologies of economic security and personal freedom conflict. However, for now, you can check out these philosophers who mainly championed economic security as paramount:

Karl Marx

We’ve all probably heard of Marxism. John Marx spent much time critiquing capitalism and instead promoting a socialist society. Marx supported the concept of everyone working together in society and sharing the wealth they accumulated. He left very little room for individualism, or individual desires in his ideology.

“Let the ruling classes tremble at the communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite!”—Karl Marx [[40]](#footnote-40)

Ludwig von Mises

Although commonly viewed as an economist, Mises uses his economic viewpoints to advocate classical liberalism. Classical liberalism promotes personal freedom and the rights of individuals. Mises believed that personal freedom and economic security worked hand-in-hand in order to improve society. “Economic knowledge necessarily leads to liberalism.”—Ludwig von Mises [[41]](#footnote-41)

Friedrich Hayek

Hayek was actually mentored by von Mises, and therefore shared many of Mises’ ideas. He was also a supporter of classical liberalism and the free market, and believed that freedom in the economic arena would aid the advancement of security. “In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Hayek turned to the debate about whether socialist planning could work. He argued that it could not. The reason socialist economists thought central planning could work, argued Hayek, was that they thought planners could take the given economic data and allocate resources accordingly.” [[42]](#footnote-42)

John Maynard Keynes

As the inspiration of Keynesian economics, Keynes supported a mixed economy—one that allowed for federal government involvement in the private sector. Keynes viewpoint was the personal freedom may be sacrificed for the sake of economic security. He strongly opposed capitalism, arguing that it gave too much freedom.

“Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone.”—John Maynard Keynes [[43]](#footnote-43)

Adam Smith

Often considered the father of capitalism, Smith explained the important role competition played in a prospering economy. He valued economic security, and detailed his view of attaining economic security in his work *The Wealth of Nations*.

“In general, if any branch of trade, or any division of labour, be advantageous to the public, the freer and more general the competition, it will always be the more so.” –Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* [[44]](#footnote-44)

John Stuart Mill

Mill was a supporter of both personal freedom and economic security, but he held that economic security was needed in order for personal freedom to exist. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “On the whole Mill supported the laissez faire economic policies that had been defended by earlier economists such a his father and David Ricardo. His overall concern was here as elsewhere with self development, and laissez faire policies seemed to provide the scope needed for individual freedom. But on further reflection, moved in this by his wife, he came to the view that personal development required not just the freedom of the economic market but also political freedom, and that this is of little use to an individual who lacks economic security and opportunity.” [[45]](#footnote-45)

General Philosophers

Below are some philosophers who may not directly relate to this year’s resolution. Most of them do not specifically talk about either economic security or personal freedom. Nonetheless, it is important to understand who they are and what their philosophies talk about, as they appear in Lincoln-Douglas every year.

Immanuel Kant

Kant’s philosophical views encompassed the categorical imperative, which is essentially doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. His idea was that a person ought to make decisions as though his or her actions became the standard for right and wrong. Although his works do not specifically address economic security and personal freedom, it seems as though Kant would be in support of personal freedom.

“Freedom is independence of the compulsory will of another, and in so far as it tends to exist with the freedom of all according to a universal law, it is the one sole original inborn right belonging to every man in virtue of his humanity.” –Immanuel Kant [[46]](#footnote-46)

Jeremy Bentham

Bentham’s beliefs ranged from defending animal’s rights to supporting utilitarianism (essentially, the greatest good for the greatest number of people). Although he probably won’t be particularly outspoken in this year’s resolution, he did have some thoughts on economics. You will see him come into play when the “greater good” is referenced.

“It is the greatest good to the greatest number of people which is the measure of right and wrong.” –Jeremy Bentham [[47]](#footnote-47)

Socrates

Socrates may be known best for his thoughts on ethics. He developed the Socratic Method, which is essentially using questions to solve problems. Socrates felt that self-development was more important than the accumulation of wealth, and he constantly sought to learn more about the world around him.

“To know is to know that you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge.” [[48]](#footnote-48)

Plato

Plato was the student of Socrates and the author/complier of Plato’s Dialogues. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy sums up Plato’s views as, “Throughout this dialogue, Plato’s guiding principle is that the good society is a harmonious union of different social elements that represent two key values: wisdom and freedom.” [[49]](#footnote-49)

Aristotle

Aristotle was Plato’s student, although the two disagreed on some issues. Aristotle held that ethics and politics worked together in society. Unlike Plato, Aristotle focused more on the concrete—he based his ideas on observation and experience.

“All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsions, habit, reason, passion, desire.”—Aristotle [[50]](#footnote-50)

Personal Freedom

What Is This Thing, Anyway?

by Ashlyn Olson

Ah, freedom. A concept that has been discussed for centuries. A right that we all cherish. In order to effectively support and negate the resolution, any debater this year will need to have a solid understanding of what personal freedom is. Picture yourself holding the end of a fishing line. To catch a fish, you first need to know where to cast your line. Hopefully, this article will springboard your research as you cast your fishing line into the concept of personal freedom.

What is Personal Freedom?

Personal freedom is broad term that can be interpreted in various ways. As with some of the terms in last year’s resolution, finding a definition of the phrase “personal freedom” can be difficult, and therefore it may need to be defined operationally (essentially, combining two sources, or coming up with your own definition). Nelson Education defines the entire phrase “personal freedom” as, “The absence of coercion in various aspects of life.” [[51]](#footnote-51) Frederick Bastiat also paints a beautiful picture of personal freedom in his book The Law when he says, “And what is this liberty, whose very name makes the heart beat faster and shakes the world? Is it not the union of all liberties — liberty of conscience, of education, of association, of the press, of travel, of labor, of trade? In short, is not liberty the freedom of every person to make full use of his faculties, so long as he does not harm other persons while doing so?” [[52]](#footnote-52)

Another aspect of freedom to consider in this year’s resolution is whether or not freedom is positive or negative liberty.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy, positive liberty is, “the possibility of acting — or the fact of acting — in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purposes…[essentially] going through the right doors for the right reasons.” [[53]](#footnote-53) Unlike negative liberty (where there is an absence of something like a barrier), positive liberty requires the presence of something—a driving factor. Because of the nature of negative liberty, it can apply to both individuals and groups. The entire group can collectively possess positive liberty, and use it to determine their actions.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy also gives us a clear definition of negative liberty, “Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints.” [[54]](#footnote-54) Essentially, negative liberty is essentially having all of your options open. No one is preventing you from doing one thing or another. You are in complete control of your decisions and actions. While positive liberty can apply to the group, negative liberty focuses solely on the individual, as the interference of another person could be considered an obstruction of negative liberty.

When arguing freedom in your cases, consider whether you are advocating more positive or negative liberty. Both can be used in this year’s resolution, as long as you argue them correctly.

Personal Freedom as a Right

So, what do “personal rights” include? In last year’s resolution, we debated about individual rights, which essentially included natural rights, human rights, and civil rights. Are personal rights the same as individual rights? Or, are they more in line with natural rights, human rights, or civil rights? In determining the answer to that question, you have to answer another question: is personal freedom something we are entitled to, or something others are entitled not to do to us?

Personal freedom is often considered a “natural right”—something that you are inherently born with. Our Declaration of Independence states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” [[55]](#footnote-55) Throughout history, governments and other people groups have found ways to *limit* this fundamental right. Sometimes, we don’t even notice that our freedom is being limited. For example, you are not allowed to drink alcohol until you are twenty-one. This limit on your personal freedom is for your own benefit. Many philosophers have argued that it is the government’s primary job to protect and provide the proper boundaries to our personal freedom, such as putting a legal age on drinking. Others argue that the government should stay out of our freedom (in other words, allow our freedom to exist in its natural state) 100% of the time. Still others argue a combination of both. Frederick Bastiat once said, “Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that life, liberty, and property existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place.” [[56]](#footnote-56)

Depending on how they are defined, human rights can mean the same thing as natural rights, or they can encompass much, much more, such as the right to social security (at least, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). [[57]](#footnote-57) Instead of being inherent rights that no one should violate, human rights have come to be known as rights that government and society *gives* to you. Does personal freedom include that type of right?

Finally, we have civil rights. Civil Rights are defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as, “The rights belonging to an individual by virtue of citizenship, especially the fundamental freedoms and privileges guaranteed by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and by subsequent acts of Congress, including civil liberties, due process, equal protection of the laws, and freedom from discrimination.” [[58]](#footnote-58) One definition of freedom found on dictionary.com actually defines freedom as, “the right to enjoy all the privileges or special rights of citizenship, membership, etc., in a community or the like.”[[59]](#footnote-59) These rights are essentially protections granted to us by the law or the government.

Depending on how you define personal freedom, the round will change dramatically. Choose your definitions and concepts of personal freedom carefully in order to best maximize your potential in the debate round.

Personal Freedom above Economic Security

Often times, personal freedom and bigger government can be considered opposites. The more government is limited, the more personal freedom flourishes. However, the larger the government becomes, the more limited personal freedom becomes. In an attempt to make a country more secure, governments sometimes intervene into the individual’s life. This is where some of the conflict will lie in this year’s resolution: how much is the government allowed to infringe on our personal freedom in the name of economic security?

Arguing from the affirmative point of view, personal freedom is sacred, and should be valued above economic security. A nation like China is considered economically secure, yet the Chinese government offers its citizens very little personal freedom. According to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China Annual Report for 2002, “The Chinese Constitution guarantees freedom of worship, assembly, speech, and other fundamental liberties, but provisions elsewhere in the Constitution undermine such freedoms.” [[60]](#footnote-60)

When comparing the list of the most economically secure countries to the corruption index, it is interesting to note the overlap. Many of the countries ranked high on the economically secure list are also high on the corruption index. Could this possibly show that some governments are willing to sacrifice freedom and integrity in order to be economically secure? For example, Sweden is 2nd on the economically secure list and 4th on the corruption index, Denmark is 12th on the economically secure list and 1st on the corruption index, New Zealand is 11th on the economically secure list and also 1st on the corruption index, Netherlands is 9th on the economically secure list and 7th on the corruption index, etc. [[61]](#footnote-61) [[62]](#footnote-62)

Is it okay for the government to sacrifice personal freedom for economic security? Is that what we are striving after?

Economic Security above Personal Freedom

Being the conservative that I am, it was at first hard for me too look at the negative side of this year’s resolution, because it tends to sound more liberal. However, I know it is valuable to understand both the pros and cons of capitalism, the free market, and personal freedom, so I quickly began to enjoy the process of exploring both sides. This year’s resolution may lend itself to more unique angles for the negative such as balanced negatives and kritiks, but for now let’s tackle head-on the phrase, “economic security ought to be valued above personal freedom.”

Many philosophers support both economic security and personal freedom, but some see economic security as superior. John Stuart Mill was one of those philosophers who held that without economic security, personal freedom cannot exist, therefore making economic security superior. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy, “On the whole Mill supported the laissez faire economic policies that had been defended by earlier economists such a his father and David Ricardo. His overall concern was here as elsewhere with self development, and laissez faire policies seemed to provide the scope needed for individual freedom. But on further reflection, moved in this by his wife, he came to the view that personal development required not just the freedom of the economic market but also political freedom, and that this is of little use to an individual who lacks economic security and opportunity.” [[63]](#footnote-63)

The debate may come down to individual considerations v. the general public’s considerations, or individualism v. collectivism. When valuing economic security above personal freedom, the government is looking beyond the individual’s concerns, and instead valuing what is best for the society.

However, you can boil the resolution down to the individual. On a more individual level, one can look at the resolution as personal freedom vs. economic security of the individual. If one has been irresponsible with finances due to exercising his freedom in irresponsible ways, this individual’s economic security will also suffer. Because the resolution does not specify whether the debate should relate personal freedom and economic security to countries, governments, or individuals, *you* get to decide how you want to mold and form the debate. You may even consider covering different angles of the resolution in your case in order to guarantee clash with whatever the affirmative brings up.

Other important idea to consider is that the resolution does not make you support economic security as the negative 100% of the time. You only have to *value* economic security *above* personal freedom *when they conflict*. Personal freedom does not have to be absent from your case; you just have to argue economic security *above* personal freedom.

Overall, economic security and personal freedom often work well together. The two create a flourishing society. But, for the negative this year, consider some of the above arguments as possibilities for showing why economic security ought to be valued above personal freedom.

Basic Economics

Economics 101: Important Terms to Know

by Shane Baumgardner and Benjamin Griffith

The Biggest Lie

I know why you’re here. You’re here because you think Lincoln Douglas debate is awesome. You are correct. Lincoln Douglas debate is awesome. Unfortunately, some people get frustrated with Lincoln Douglas debate rounds. I’ve heard several people tell me that LD debate rounds are a pain to watch because there seems to be no clash between the two speakers. It appears that the debaters are talking about two entirely different ideas, two entirely different circumstances and two entirely different resolutions. Why does this happen? It happens because people have believed the biggest lie.

The biggest lie in Lincoln Douglas debate is that Lincoln Douglas debate requires minimal or no research. “This is LD! Who needs evidence? Who needs support? Why should I waste time with research?” The truth is that research is absolutely vital for LD debate. No, we’re not debating whether or not we should enact a policy. No, we don’t need to know what Professor J.R. Oswald Frederick Amadeus Wolfgang Johannes Javier Saknovichoeffer Ph.D. from Oxwagon University said in 2008 concerning personal freedom and economic security. But we *do* need to know what we are talking about. More than ever before, understanding this year’s resolution requires research. If the LD debater takes the time to read up on his topic and develop a strong understanding for the concepts involved with his resolution, the quality of his debates will soar. His judges will walk away thinking, “Wow. Lincoln Douglas debate is awesome.”

This article is designed to give you a “head start” on your research. We’ll look at some basic economic concepts, how those concepts apply to the debate round, and a few pointers for continuing research on this resolution.

**Supply** – The amount of a given product that producers are willing to and able to sell to consumers.

**Demand** – The amount of a given product that consumers are willing to and able to buy from producers.

**Scarcity of Goods and Services –** The idea that certain goods and services are limited in availability. The scarcity of a good will come up an increasing demand for it. Scarcity is determined by factors such as limited resource access, limited technological capabilities, production costs, etc.

Supply and Demand

One of my favorite things in the entire universe is Coke. The reasons are pretty obvious, so we won’t go into those details. I love Coke. Everyone loves Coke. Everyone wants it. But in order to get a can of Coke into someone’s hands, the Coca-Cola Company has to make it. This simple example illustrates the complex economic concept of supply and demand.

The economic model of supply and demand is important for determining the unit price of every product in the competitive market. Here’s how it works: When we talk about how much Coca-Cola is being made at a certain time, we’re looking at the*supply* of Coca-Cola. Supply is affected by economic *scarcity of goods and services.*Depending on production costs, technological capabilities for production, future price expectations, and the number of suppliers involved in production, every product will have a certain supply amount[[64]](#footnote-64). When we ask about the supply of a certain good, we’re asking, “how much of that good are producers willing to and able to sell to consumers?” The *demand* of a product is affected by the consumers’ income, the consumers’ tastes and preferences, the consumers’ future expectations on the price of the product, and the overall number of consumers in the market. If I were to say that the demand for Coca-Cola was high, it would mean that there are a large number of people craving a can of Coke. When we ask about the demand of a certain good, we’re asking “how much of that good are consumers willing to and able to buy from producers?”

General economic theory holds that the unit price of a product will vary and fluctuate until the quantity of the product being demanded is balanced with the quantity of product being supplied. A balance between supply and demand results in what we call *economic equilibrium* of price and quantity. Typically, the price will be higher when the demand increases but the supply is limited. If there is excess supply and low demand for a product, its unit price will be lower.

While the idea of supply and demand may not directly link to this year’s resolution, it is a foundational element for almost all economic theories you will ever study. It’s important to be familiar with the basic idea of supply and demand.

**Economic Equilibrium –** A state of balance and stability in price and quantity reached when the supply and demand for a product are equal.

**Boom and Bust –** The economy is like a rollercoaster. It has its highs and lows, its ups and downs, its climbs and dives—all that fun stuff. We call the “rollercoaster-ness” of the economy *boom and bust*. Booms and busts occur when an economy goes through large and rapid growth cycles followed by an economic downturn. The cycle then repeats itself over and over.

When it comes to the details of boom-bust economic cycles, we see no clear agreement on how it all works. There are countless economic theories on how and why the economy experiences these ups and downs. For further understanding on some of these theories, read some of the other articles in the Red Book on different economists. You’ll also want to do your own research on Boom and Bust. The theories behind this concept largely relate to economic security and personal freedom. How do we prevent economic recessions? Is it best for the government to regulate everything in order to ensure that the “bust” never arrives, or should we let it grow naturally and risk economic collapse?

**Unemployment** - The unemployment rate is the percentage of people who want a job that cannot find one. There are three basic types of unemployment that we will cover here- cyclical, structural, and frictional. Cyclical unemployment is very closely related to the boom and bust cycle. As the economy goes through its ups and downs, businesses hire and lay-off employees. This is generally the most common form of unemployment. People lose their jobs as the economy goes downward then get new ones (or return to their old jobs) when the economy rebounds. Structural unemployment is more rigid and finds its cause in more fundamental shifts in the economy. A great example of structural unemployment would be the workers that made riding equipment and lost their jobs when horses were replaced by cars. They may eventually find another source of employment, but they are going to have to learn a new set of skills. The structure of the economy changed such that their jobs were no longer needed, leading to their “structural” unemployment. Frictional unemployment occurs when a worker is merely between jobs. This unemployment is usually voluntary, as a worker is moving from one job to the other, and is very temporary.

**Inflation** - The most basic way to understand inflation is this: you get less bang for your buck. Essentially, inflation means that your money is worth less. The dollar that bought you two loaves of bread yesterday may only buy you one today. Inflation is best recognized in rising prices across the board. There are many different things that can cause inflation, but the two most basic are devaluation of a currency and supply-pull inflation. Devaluation of a currency occurs when there is less demand for the currency. Either people just don’t want that particular type of money anymore, or there is too much of it in the economy, causing it to be worth less to people (basic supply and demand). The other cause for inflation is an increased aggregate demand (or total demand in the economy) that is not accompanied by an increase in aggregate supply (total supply in the economy), this causes prices to go up across the board (aka: inflation).

**Deflation** - This is essentially the inverse of inflation (see above). Your money is now worth more than it was before. What bought you two loves of bread will now buy you three. There are also many causes for deflation, which reveals itself in falling prices across the board. Here we will touch on the two major causes, increased demand for a currency and decreased aggregate demand in the economy. Increased demand for a currency can occur when that currency is viewed as highly reliable, or if there is not enough of the currency in the economy to satisfy the need for it. This causes the currency to be worth more and therefore forces prices downwards. Decreased aggregate demand means that there is less of a desire for goods and services in the economy than there was before. There can be several causes for this, but the most common is a general economic slump. Demand goes down because people simply don’t have the wealth to support their previous spending habits. Falling prices may sound like a good thing at first, but deflation can be deadly to an economy because businesses lose their profit margins, perpetuating any economic trouble or even causing additional problems.

**Fiat Money** - Investopedia defines fiat money as “Currency that a government has declared to be legal tender, despite the fact that it has no intrinsic value and is not backed by reserves. Historically, most currencies were based on physical commodities such as gold or silver, but fiat money is based solely on faith.”[[65]](#footnote-65) In other words the “money” is really worth nothing more than the paper it’s printed on. The government “fiats” that it has value as legal tender for purchases and debts and the currency draws all of its value from a combination of that command and the laws of supply and demand (see inflation and deflation).

**Welfare** - Welfare is often used as a shorthand term for government handouts to the poor. These can take a variety of forms, cash payments, food stamps etc. but their basic goal is to minimize poverty, or at least make it livable.

**Social Security** - Social Security is defined by Business Dictionary as a “Government [program](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/program.html) aimed at providing basic [needs](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/need.html) to [citizens](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/citizen.html) who are [retired](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/retired.html), [unemployed](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/unemployed.html), or unemployable [due](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/due.html) to a [disability](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/disability.html) or [disadvantage](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/disadvantage.html). It is [funded](http://www.investorwords.com/9807/funded.html) usually by [mandatory](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/mandatory.html) [payroll](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/payroll.html) [contributions](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/contribution.html) (typically 5 to 8 [percent](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/percent.html) of a [paycheck](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/paycheck.html)) from both the [employees](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/employee.html) and the [employers](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/employer.html), and from the [government's](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/government.html) [tax](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/tax.html) [revenue](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/revenue.html).”[[66]](#footnote-66) The biggest key about Social Security as it relates to this year’s resolution is that the payments are mandatory for workers in America. Rather than investing for your own retirement, the government has taken over part of that for you to ensure that you have something to live off of in your old age.

**Unemployment Benefits** - If a taxpayer is unable to find gainful employment, and meets certain other criteria, they may be eligible for unemployment benefits. These benefits essentially act as an insurance policy against unemployment, giving the unemployed a bridge of income until the get to their next job. The benefits are paid out of a state or federal fund that is sustained by mandatory payroll taxes on companies and individuals.

**Income Inequality** - Income inequality is a measure of how evenly income is distributed in a society. If wealth and income is pretty equally distributed throughout the classes of a society, income inequality is low. If there are large gaps between the rich and the poor, income inequality will be high. Economists use Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients to quantify the level of inequality within a given economy. Many economist believe there is an inverse relationship between income inequality and the quality of life for a country, but that belief is not a universal one as of yet.

**Poverty** - The Economist magazine does a great job of describing poverty as “The state of being poor, which depends on how you define it. One approach is to use some absolute measure. For instance, the poverty rate refers to the number of households whose [INCOME](http://www.economist.com/research/economics/alphabetic.cfm?term=income#income) is less than three times what is needed to provide an adequate diet. (Though what constitutes adequate may change over time.) Another is to measure relative poverty. For instance, the number of people in poverty can be defined as all households with an income of less than, say, half the [AVERAGE](http://www.economist.com/research/economics/alphabetic.cfm?term=average#average) household income. Or the (relative) poverty line may be defined as the level of income below which are, say, the poorest 10% of households. In each case, the dividing line between poverty and not-quite poverty is somewhat arbitrary. As countries get richer, the number of people in absolute poverty usually gets smaller. This is not necessarily true of the numbers in relative poverty. The way that relative poverty is defined means that it is always likely to identify a large number of impoverished households. However rich a country becomes, there will always be 10% of households poorer than the rest, even though they may live in mansions and eat caviar (albeit smaller mansions and less caviar than the other 90% of households).”[[67]](#footnote-67) There’s really nothing more to say on that topic.

**Upper Class** - It is notoriously difficult to define exactly who falls into what class of society. The size of the “upper” class varies from society to society, as does their level of wealth. The key to remember is that they are the “above average” earners. They tend to have much more influence on society and control a disproportionate percentage of the wealth compared with the rest of society.

**Working Class** - This is the lower tier of society. It includes almost all physical laborers and jobs that require low skill levels. The members of this society typically have a lower level of education than other classes and control a very limited percentage of the societies wealth.

**Middle Class** - The middle class acts as a catch all for everyone who doesn’t belong in the upper or lower classes. They usually have a higher level of education than the lower class and fill jobs that typically do not involve physical labor. At the same time, they don’t have the same income or influence as the upper class. Think of this as the “average” group in society.

2: In Theory, Anyway…

Debate Theory Fun with Travis Herche

“If everything else fails,

read the instructions.”

**Free the Hamster**

*How to Run Values Correctly*

*by Travis Herche*

**How to Write a Case in 60 Seconds or Less**

*Building Solid Frameworks*

*by Travis Herche*

**How to Run a Kritik Without Hating Yourself**

*Kritik Theory in LD Debate*

*by Travis Herche*

Free the Hamster

How to Run Values Correctly

by Travis Herche

The Problem

*“Resolved: that genocide is caused by fear.”*

The affirmative points to the Sudanese genocide and says it is motivated by fear of other ethnicities. This proves the resolution! It’s a case of fear causing genocide. The negative points to the medieval Muslim conquest of India, widely regarded as the greatest genocide in history. It was caused by religious bigotry - hatred, not fear. The affirmative counters with the Nazi holocaust of the Jews. The negative points to the French Huguenot wars.

And at the end of the round, the judge has no idea how to vote.

A Value debate built around applications and analogies is like a hamster playing on his wheel. Debaters have plenty of evidence, but they’re not proving anything. And sadly, a poorly run value does almost nothing to alleviate the problem. In home school speech and debate, most value debaters will devote only a sentence or two to their value, because they feel the need to push on quickly to their contentions and applications. But in the end, no matter how hard they try and how well they argue, they’re just running faster on the same wheel. They’re not actually proving the resolution true or false because they have no case logic.

What is a Value?

*A value is an external measure for the resolution.* It provides a means of evaluating whether or not the resolution is true by comparing it against a standard. Consider the genocide resolution. The affirmative wants to prove that genocide is caused by fear. Why? Perhaps because all the great genocides were racist, and racism is the product of fear. So the affirmative is saying: “Genocide is caused by fear because it is all about racism.”

That’s a logic that the affirmative can use to step off the hamster wheel and reason with the judge. The judge no longer has to pick from a smorgasbord of applications (which is confusing at best). Now he can decide whether or not genocide is caused by racism. A decision point!

Let’s pause for a moment to talk about what a value is NOT. The following definition has proven very popular among beginning debaters: “A value is the highest possible good in the round.” If that were true, the value should always be “God’s Will,” regardless of the resolution or arguments. God’s Will is the highest possible good, either beating or subsuming all others. It also does nothing to answer many value debate questions. But because values are measures, they are only as good as the resolution they are measuring. If that resolution deals with a moral gray area, or something evil, the value will reflect that. *Values don’t have to be good.*

Also incorrect is a value that that doesn’t provide a standard for measuring the resolution. A resolution like “Truth” is meaningless - it offers no standard. Truth is truth. Your hand is true. Ponies are true. Assyrian torture is true. None of it has any impact on a round.

The same goes for values taken straight out of the resolution. Last year, the resolution was: “Resolved: that a government’s legitimacy is determined more by its respect for popular sovereignty than individual rights.” Many debaters correctly identified that the debate was about legitimacy, and thus reasoned that the best value was “Legitimacy.” This is not external to the resolution, and that makes it circular: “A government’s legitimacy is determined by legitimacy.”

A meaningful value must be an external standard, and it must provide a way to measure the resolution. That makes value debate unique and exciting because every resolution calls for different values. In a discussion of genocide, values like Racism and Hate are perfectly reasonable.

How to Run a Value

It’s not enough to just name a value and read a definition. You need to explain why it is relevant to the round. You do that with Value Links. These explain how the value is related to the resolution - and why it has a place in the round. A value statement for Racism could have two value links: Racism is caused by fear, and Racism causes genocide.

It’s common practice to run a Value Link in the first contention. This is confusing and unnecessary because it separates your case logic into different places on your flow. For instance, if your value is Justice, your first contention should not be Justice is Paramount. That’s a value link. You can communicate more clearly and persuasively by bringing everything together in once place. By the time you finish your value statement, you should have said everything you need to say about your value - and that’s a lot.

Running applications in the value is not just reasonable; for many values, it is necessary. Value statements can get pretty big, and that’s great. Theoretically, you could win a round with nothing but a great value and some well-defended links. On the other hand, if you lose your value it should be nearly impossible to win the round. That’s not true of any other well-established argument in value debate theory (excluding kritiks).

Be prepared to spend time on your value. Define it, explain it, defend it. Your value shouldn’t be an afterthought; it should be the main event. Make certain that it is clearly tied to the resolution. Don’t skimp on it. From there, your criterion - if any - and contentions should be very straightforward.

Remember: if you don’t link your value to the resolution, your entire case is a waste of time. Thus, your best approach is to make that link an explicitly tagged argument. For an example of how to do this, study the “We Can Be Heroes” affirmative case provided in this book.

**How to Run a Counter-Value**

When you present a value of your own that you want to use as a replacement for your opponent’s value, you need to do more than just tell the judge what your value is called. Be ready for a value debate!

First, define your value. Operational definitions are just as qualified as dictionary ones. You’re just explaining your argument, so you’re correct in however you define. This is as opposed to terms in the resolution, which are up for debate because they weren’t invented by one of the debaters. For your value, run any definition you want and don’t argue against your opponent’s definition. If you think the opposing value doesn’t describe its definition, it’s okay to propose a new wording. But don’t tell your opponent what he’s arguing.

Next, run your value link(s). Try to make them as specific and descriptive as possible.

Finally - and this is an absolutely key step - run Reasons to Prefer. These explain why the judge should choose to favor your value over your opponent’s. If you don’t run RTPs, it’s nearly impossible to have a good value debate, and that means your beautiful value will get lost in the contention swamp. Run everything you have to say contrasting the values in the round in the Reasons to Prefer.

Obviously, this means a portion of your NC must be unscripted. You can plan ahead against certain values, but in the end you must be ready to look up from your script, speak from the flow, then return to the script for the criterion or contentions.

When you’re done with your case, it should be very easy to deal with the affirmative. You’ve already killed his framework (value + criterion) and it’s likely that all his contentions assume a non-dead value. So you can run a group response: “No Impact.” The contentions fell with the value! And ten seconds later, you’re done refuting the affirmative case.

Running values correctly forces both sides to embrace the heart and soul of value resolutions. It stops being a question of semantics and interpretations, and instead becomes a battle of ideas. As a value debater, you can rise to the highest level of argumentation and discuss basic ideas and worldviews. You’ll have more fun, you’ll win more rounds, and when you leave speech and debate you’ll have learned how to persuade people where they truly need to understand.

So give the hamster a break.

How to Write a Case in 60 Seconds or Less

Building Solid Frameworks

by Travis Herche

You need a case.

While most LD debaters will run less than four cases over the course of a year, you stand to benefit from having a comprehensive procedure for writing them. Writing cases doesn’t have to be intimidating or time-consuming. If you know how to do it, you can quickly create complete cases and then evaluate whether or not you want to take them to tournaments. You can also ensure that your case doesn’t have any glaring gaps because you already created a complete chain of case logic in the planning phase.

It’s time for case writing to be quick, fun, and easy. Ready?

Start with a contention application. This is the most practical, easy to understand piece of a case, so it can help you build the more abstract theoretical parts of the case logic while remaining grounded.

Suppose I’m building an affirmative case. I want an example in which personal freedom is correctly valued over economic security. What about missionaries? They give up economic security and often travel to distant places, using their personal freedom for good. That could work.

*Contention: Personal Freedom is good*

*Application: Missionaries*

Now I can start building upward. Why is it good that missionaries do what they do? How about because they spread love to others. Love is great! Maybe it’s a good value. Let’s put it in the framework.

*Framework: Love is good*

*Contention: Personal freedom leads to Love*

*Application: Missionaries*

But the framework needs to provide a way to measure the resolution, and it’s hard to link Love directly. What if we make Love a criterion for some higher, broader, more universal idea … like Noble Life? Of course we’ll have to link Love to Noble Life, by saying that Love fills the emptiness in our lives and gives us purpose.

*Value: Noble Life*

*Criterion: Love*

*Link: Fill the Emptiness*

*Contention: Personal Freedom leads to Love*

*Application: Missionaries*

Now we have the makings of a case. Let’s make sure the value makes sense by putting in two value links:

*Resolution: Personal Freedom > Economic Security*

*Value: Noble Life*

*Link: Life Goals*

*Link: Universal*

*Criterion: Love*

*Link: Fill the Emptiness*

*Contention: Personal Freedom leads to Love*

*Application: Missionaries*

I like where this is going, but the case doesn’t really deal with economic security much. Maybe I should add another contention. Because I want to end on a positive note, I’ll talk about Economic Security first and Personal Freedom second. And while I’m at it, I’ll tweak the tags.

*Resolution: In conflict, Personal Freedom > Economic Security*

*Value: Noble Life*

*Link: Life Goals*

*Link: Universal*

*Criterion: Love*

*Link: Fill the Emptiness*

*Contention 1: Economic Security restrains Love*

*Contention: Personal Freedom enables Love*

*Application: Missionaries*

That’s a workable case logic. Now it’s time to revisit the applications. I want an example of economic security restraining love - someone who chooses money instead of freedom and embodies the opposite of a missionary. With a little research, I find Hetty Green, a miserly woman from the early 1900s.

But now I don’t like my original application. I’d rather have a direct inverse of Hetty Green. Someone who lived in poverty but spread love through personal freedom. What about a female missionary, to show what Hetty Green could have been? Mother Theresa would work nicely.

*Resolution: In conflict, Personal Freedom > Economic Security*

*Value: Noble Life*

*Link: Life Goals*

*Link: Universal*

*Criterion: Love*

*Link: Fill the Emptiness*

*Contention 1: Economic Security restrains Love*

*Application: Hetty Green*

*Contention: Personal Freedom enables Love*

*Application: Mother Theresa*

And just like that, I have a complete case flow!

The easiest way to write the case out is by drawing a diagram with pencil and paper, adjusting as you go. Build a simple system of symbols so you can take in your case logic at a glance and see what needs fixing. Don’t neglect your value and criterion links.

The diagramming technique is great for breaking down opposing cases as well. When they’re exposed visually you can find the weakest chain link and break it.

How to Run a Kritik Without Hating Yourself

Kritik Theory in LD Debate

by Travis Herche

This year's resolution, like last year’s, has two phrases that are not easily found as a full phrase in most dictionaries. It uses ambiguous words and creates a paradox that is hard to accept even at face value, thereby excluding vast libraries of political thought. Does this mean it's a bad resolution? No. We're still going to have a great year of serious, educational, entertaining debate.

Again, we find ourselves with a resolution that cries out for a resolutional kritik. Advanced debaters should at least consider running a kritik. Let me show you how.

Understanding Traditional Kritiks

A kritik (abbreviated “K” in debate parlance) is an argument against a mindset or assumption - usually implicit - in the argumentation or behavior of your opponent. This is in contrast with typical debate arguments, which either support/oppose the resolution or counter an opponent's argument.

Traditionally, a kritik argues that the opponent has done something that needs to be punished or immediately discontinued. For instance, you might say: “The negative should be punished for the coarse language in the last speech.” Or “The affirmative's competitive mindset is ruining the activity of debate.” Or “In use of the word 'he' to describe a hypothetical person, my opponent was sexist.”

Most kritiks are structured with a link-impact-alternative format, a little like a policy disadvantage. Link - “Negative's blind support of America is nationalistic.” Impact - “Nationalism destroys lives.” Alternative - “To prevent the further spread of this insidious idea, we must vote against the negative.” Some debate theorists call kritik impacts “implications.”

Kritiks are frowned on in most debate circles. This is because they tend to push the debate away from the resolution toward something that is less educational and more generic. For instance, if you're running a kritik arguing that debate resolutions are immoral, you're likely to have a very similar debate every single round, in which you argue theory instead of value.

While judges in most leagues are willing to accept a well-run kritik, homeschool leagues stigmatize them. Many judges will mentally drop their pen the moment they hear the word. This doesn't mean you can't run a kritik, but it does mean you have to be prudent.

The Two Kinds of Kritiks

There are many, many kinds of kritiks. Most of them are unimportant to you as a homeschool LDer. Let's divide the more important kritiks into two basic categories: reactional and resolutional. Reactional kritiks are a response to the behavior or arguments of your opponent. If you're accusing your opponent of something, it's probably a reactional kritik. If he should be punished for pushing an idea (feminism, hegemony), saying something (swearing, quoting Machiavelli), or using a certain tactic (making a new argument in rebuttals, speed and spread), it's a reactional kritik.

Many homeschool debaters unknowingly use kritiks all the time, particularly in policy debate. The correct impact to a resolutionality argument is burden – the affirmative case isn't supporting the resolution, so it has no impact on the round. This is a standard, non-kritik impact, because it counters affirmative arguments supporting the resolution. Many debaters, especially novices, will impact it differently. They'll run an impact of fairness – the affirmative is unbalancing the round and making it hard for the negative to debate.

This has no bearing on the round proper – instead, the negative is asking the judge to penalize the affirmative for abusive behavior. Even if the affirmative wins the arguments, the negative thinks the round should still go against him. Though few debaters realize it, this is a kritik.

Another kritik common in all forms of debate is the dropped argument kritik, in which a debater argues that an argument, having been dropped, should be considered a de facto victory for the other side. Debaters rarely argue that their opponents should be punished for dropping an argument with a loss, but they do say things like: “it's too late to bring this argument up again – this is the last negative speech so I wouldn't have a chance to respond.” In other words: “The only fair thing to do is flow this argument negative.” In yet other words: “Independent of the actual merit of this argument, I should win it.” This is a kritik.

Ironically, some debaters will respond to a kritik by saying that it is abusive or destroys the educational value of debate. This is a counter-kritik – a humorously oxymoronic one.

Kritiks don't necessarily reject the consideration of merit in kritiked arguments. They may also contend that the argument is true, but the kritik outweighs it. This is more popular in team policy debate, where a team might say: “The affirmative may solve their harms and save a billion dollars, but that's nothing when you consider the fact that they're spreading statism.”

You’re going to find reactional kritiks most prevalent in Team Policy debate, where students will often be very up-front that they are, in fact, running a kritik. These reactional kritiks, while present in Lincoln-Douglas, are generally hidden. As discussed earlier, the kritik-er may not know that’s what he or she is running, the kritik-ee will probably miss this fact as well. And when it comes to a kritik against a philosophy, well, that’s pretty standard argumentation for Lincoln-Douglas debaters anyway.

What is going to be large this year in Lincoln-Douglas is the resolutional kritik. The resolutional kritik contends that a fundamental assumption of the resolution is flawed or offensive, therefore it should not or cannot be debated.

Sample resolutional kritiks:

* Resolved: that Asians are smarter than people of other races. Kritik: this resolution forces us to think in racist terms. Racism is evil, so we should avoid it by removing the resolution from the round.
* Resolved: stuff and other stuff. Kritik: The resolution is meaningless and should be discarded.
* Resolved: that McCain would have been a better president. Kritik: Obama is our president. Questioning him by considering the merits of a replacement is treason. This resolution should be removed because it is treasonous.
* Resolved: that blue and triangle are complementary. Kritik: blue and triangle are incomparable. There is now way to determine whether or not they are complementary, so the resolution should be removed.
* Resolved: that there ain't nothing more important than liberty. Kritik: the resolution forces debaters to use bad grammar. Preserve the educational value of debate by discarding it.

There are many ways to kritik a resolution. The key to all of them is that they do not argue about the veracity of the resolution, but instead question its place in the round. These examples show obvious problems within their resolutions, but kritiks are perfectly valid in this year’s homeschool resolution as well.

How to Run a Kritik

Kritiks are run all the time in homeschool debate – they're just not tagged as such. If debaters and judges realized how common they were, the stigma might begin to disappear.

But for now, you're not here to crusade for a better understanding of kritiks in your league. You just want to run good arguments that win rounds. Like it or not, many of your judges will have a knee-jerk negative reaction if they hear or suspect that you are running a kritik. When you question the merit of the resolution, the first question the judge asks is “Then… why are you debating? Are you wasting my time?” Even if you get past that, you need to run a valid kritik, not the kind that gives the whole class of arguments a bad name. Unless you're confident your judge can handle a kritik, adopt the following approach.

The first step is to cut the word “kritik” from your speech vocabulary. Protect your judge's ears from it. Run all the substance and logic of the kritik, but don't call it one. If your argument is valid, it will be given the light of day.

Second, disguise your kritik. If you run it as just another response, or structure it as a case, or as a “negative philosophy,” it will be easier to stomach. A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down. Professional college judges expect a link-impact-alternative format with quotations from obscure philosophers like Slavoj Žižek. But homeschool parents and community judges will be uncomfortable with anything other than a six minute affirmative case with a value, a few contentions, and at least one application, followed by a similar three to four minute negative case.

The link-impact-alternative structure is the most logically sound way to present a kritik. Converting it to standard case format is no easy task, and there are no real shortcuts for it. Work through the standard LD framework-contention-application structure and try to find something to fit into each slot. If you can't, note that you don't and explain why.

In a best case scenario, you will be the only person who knows there is a kritik in the room.

Stick to your guns when you run a kritik. Don't run it conditionally; don't qualify it; don't apologize for it. Be aggressive. Many kritiks are exclusive – they can't be run alongside normal arguments. If you're arguing that the resolution can't be debated, don't argue that and then go ahead and debate it anyway (thereby disproving your kritik).

For a sample resolutional kritik that has been carefully disguised as a standard negative case, check out the “No Conflict” case included in this book.

3: Big Ideas

Looking Deeper into Major Concepts

“A mind,

once stretched by a new idea,

never regains its original dimension.”

**The Fate of a Fawn**

*Personal Finance and its Effects on Economic Stability*

*by Jesse Byrnes*

**Capitalism**

*A Love-Hate Relationship*

*by Chase Harrington*

**Protect Us! Just… Not Too Much**

*The Eternal Paradox of Government Regulation*

*by Shane Baumgardner*

**Getting What You Deserve**

*Self-Interest in Freedom and Economics*

*by Elizabeth Ertle*

**One Economist to Rule Them All**

*An Introduction to Keynesian Economics*

*by Jon Bateman*

**Entrepreneurship**

*The Ideology for Success*

by Cynthia Jeub

The Fate of a Fawn

Personal Finance and its Effects on Economic Stability

by Jesse Byrnes

Fawns (yes, reddish-brown baby deer). Did you know that, for the first two weeks of their lives, baby fawns are too weak to keep up with their mothers and thus stay camouflaged while their mothers go find food?[[68]](#footnote-68) By themselves they would stay covered in the thicket, though would die from lack of nourishment. If they were to try and find food on their own, chances are they would fall victim to one of countless predators. How in the world does this resolution and personal freedom relate to fawns and predators?

Personal freedom is like a fawn. It relates to an individual subject, seemingly innocent, that relies on staying put until a bigger, stronger agent is used to provide supplication for its needs. Personal freedom is just that –– *personal* –– unless economic security is taken into account. Without the mother, the fawn would die. Without economic security, what is personal freedom but a shiny mirror or a hopeless deer? If personal freedom is used by itself, it will likely cause trouble and illicit hurt from countless predators. Loan sharks, scams, and government bureaucracy can all weigh heavily on the success of an individual. Lone-wolfing is likely to get you eaten. Also, personal freedom –– like a fawn –– is too weak to really make an impact on anything. In an age where trillions of dollars are in circulation, how does the budget of even the most successful individual compare? Millionaires and billionaires are rich, but last I checked, worldionaires were not in circulation.

In this article, we will explore personal freedom through the lens of personal finance and see how personal financial decisions can affect economic security and stability. Finance, according to Princeton University, is “the branch of economics that studies the management of money and other assets.”[[69]](#footnote-69) One interpretation of the resolution is to think of “economic security” and finance as it relates to the economy as a whole and as it relates to an individual or household.[[70]](#footnote-70) A nation's economy includes things like unemployment numbers, deficits, and stock prices (macroeconomics), while an individual or household's economy includes things like income, job security, mortgage payments, and consumer price indexes (microeconomics). Finances and financing (managing money and assets) can apply to both the individual and the nation. When it comes down to a personal level, this can include the management of money and assets of a family, couple, or individual. Budgeting fun activities, groceries, a home mortgage, car repairs, and vacations all fall into this category.

Remember the credit card crisis in the U.S.? (Or are we still in that?) People go about their daily activities, not realizing that the piece of plastic they swiped several times a day translated into more and more red ink on a credit card statement. How is one free when creditors come knocking? Personal freedom leading to economic insecurity via credit card debt is not unique to the U.S. The U.K. is currently suffering a debt crisis as a fourth of families struggle to make their payments.[[71]](#footnote-71) In fact, in the United Kingdom, the average personal debt stands at approximately £10,000, or $14,225.[[72]](#footnote-72) Concerning personal financial decisions, Americans are now facing a beast even gnarlier than credit card debt: student loans. As the New York Times reported in April, student loans have surpassed credit cards as the number one source of debt in the nation, nearing $1 trillion.[[73]](#footnote-73) “The Project On Student Debt estimates that the average college senior in 2009 graduated with $24,000 in outstanding loans,” Malcolm Harris reports for the *n+1* magazine, “Yet for all the moralizing about American consumer debt by both parties, no one dares call higher education a bad investment. The nearly axiomatic good of a university degree in American society has allowed a higher education bubble to expand to the point of bursting.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

And it is not just personal student loans or credit cards that can cause economic insecurity on an individual and national scale. “Bad loans,” long-term unemployment compensation, and free healthcare are just some of the ways a lack of personal finance has led to economic insecurity. It is hard to come into terms with the concept of Income ≥ Expenses[[75]](#footnote-75) when you get used to someone else picking up the tab. Research the most recent financial disaster in the U.S., and you will find that valuing personal freedom (on some level and to some large extent) led to economic insecurity which led to a *loss* in personal freedom*.* Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. Fool me three times? Three strikes and you are OUT.

But when it comes to personal finance, how can one be successful and pave the wave to economic stability? The book *Common Sense Economics* relays twelve key elements concerning a successfully run economy. The first? “1. Incentives matter.”[[76]](#footnote-76) Incentives are key for several reasons.

First, incentives provide a goal. Suppose you are employed as a lawn mower (one who cuts lawns, unless you are a machine transformer, in which case I would get some help upstairs). One household is getting ready to leave for the airport to go on vacation and need their lawn done pronto. They offer you a 20 percent bonus that particular week if you are able to finish the lawn in half the time it normally takes. Obviously, the incentive and possibility of a bonus forces you to work extra speedy.

The second reason incentives matter is because they provide a framework on how to achieve that goal. Most incentives do not just *exist*; certain steps must be taken in order for the incentive to be obtained. As soon as you apply for college scholarships you will find that, in order for them to offer you a scholarship, they must justify offering you the scholarship by having you prove your worthiness, whether need-based or merit-based.

Another key reason why incentives matter is that they provide a criteria for success. Usually, if you are successful, you will be rewarded with whatever the incentive was to begin with. If you mow a lawn in half the time, you will be rewarded with a bonus –– a measure of your success; if you are given a college scholarship, you are rewarded for your merits –– another criteria for success. Incentives matter. When individuals have incentives, they are capable of using personal financial decisions to further economic security.

Most would agree that incentives are vital for a successfully functioning economy, but how do they relate to personal finance? Well, they can be related on several levels. Take any intro to economics course and you will soon find out that economics is a behavioral science: it tracks the patterns of consumers, calculates the appropriate public policy or private sector approach, and measures the impact. Basic economic principles such as demand, supply, and the equilibrium price therein all play a role in how an economy functions. On the most basic of levels, individuals (ideally) will see things that they want (e.g., new clothes, car, vacation, etc.) and will manage their resources in order to obtain them. They are provided with an incentive to wisely manage their personal finances –– including budgeting their time, energy and money –– and are rewarded. As *Common Sense Economics* relates in its opening paragraph, “Life is about choices, and economics is about how incentives affect those choices and shape our lives.”[[77]](#footnote-77)

Personal freedom and economic security do not have to be incompatible. They do not have to conflict. Yes, there can be some friction between valuing individualism versus collectivism, but that is not unique to economics. Political science, sociology, psychology, and criminology all deal in part with the friction between the freedom of man versus the framework in which he lives. Turn to classical economic philosopher Adam Smith and his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). As Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner explore in their New York Times Bestseller *Freakonomics*, “Smith's true subject was the friction between individual desire and societal norms.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

On a fundamental level, individuals want to operate, well, individually. Sure, Bob Smith and Bill Jones may think alike at times –– buy the same conditioner, live in proximity to one another, even contribute funds to the same non-profits –– but while Bob may budget $50 for weekly dates with his wife, Bill might budget $500 (what a guy, right?). Suppose Bob manages his personal finances and is capable of paying off his home by age 40. He has become, to some extent, economically secure. At the same time, Bill is off blowing hundreds a week to please his wife, and is forced to rent for the rest of his life. This resolution, viewed through personal finance and economic stability, puts a framework over debates that influence Americans on a daily basis. The economically secure thing would be to pay off your student loans on a continual basis before they pile up, or set aside a percent of every paycheck to cut down on that credit card debt before it goes and buys you a spade and cemetery plot. Economic security and personal freedom are just two lofty ideas floating around the cushy room of your judge's mind unless you limit personal freedom to personal financial freedom and decision-making.

When dealing with economic security (quite broad), one is sure to cross paths with different types of economic structures and the functions of each. You may not be interested in the functions of a society enough to pick up the allegorical pen of the likes of George Orwell in *Animal Farm*, but you should definitely be interested in the role of individuals and their freedoms compared to the necessity for equality and stability in a society and for an economy. Karl Marx popularized the idea "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."[[79]](#footnote-79) What is missing? Incentives and room for personal growth, perhaps? At face value, it would be pretty boring if everyone only did what they were good at from birth (abilities) and tried to take from society for their adulthood (current needs). We already have enough babbling baboons. Though, put the focus on incentivizing individuals and providing a *reason* to do better, and individuals will be stretched to achieve more and make something out of their lives. Forget about using personal freedom to secure the economy; it could stabilize humanity. I am not suggesting economic classes of individuals splinter and go at life as lone-wolves, nor would I suggest we mingle our money together into a large lump-o-cash. Rather, when personal freedom is coupled *with* economic security, as opposed to under or above it, individuals can prosper. Leave the unity, utopia and propaganda of socialism to... socialists. (Dealing with economic systems: Want to send your opponent for a loop? Try exploring the relation between personal freedom and the *free market*.)

Personal freedom and economic security can, and oftentimes *are*, good ideas to value. So, why not go completely in one direction or another? Can you achieve either value by solely pursing the other? Twentieth-century economist Milton Friedman once popularly vocalized that “[t]here's nothing that does so much harm as good intentions.”[[80]](#footnote-80) Unfortunately, as in the case of something like long-term unemployment benefits, pursuing economic security (or stability, for a better word) does not lead to an increase in personal freedom, but in an increase in dependency and reduction in personal freedom. As Harry S. Truman put it, “It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose your own.”[[81]](#footnote-81) Economic security is vital, and becomes increasingly important the closer to home it gets. Ask any of the millions of unemployed Americans today. Economic security can get very personal, very quickly, though the key to stability is freedom, not dependency.

At the same time, ignoring economic stability and solely valuing the responsibility and freedom of individuals can prove costly, such as with the credit card crisis. Understand that personal freedom and economic security can be compatible, and when personal freedom and finance include things like incentives, nothing but good can come about (or so they say). We often think of personal freedom as a verb and economic security as a noun. One can think of personal freedom as the liberty to make choices and how those decisions affect their lives, while another may approach economic security as something that is in place and shifts either for the better or for the worse, depending on how personal freedom is used (or abused). As many would contend outside rounds and in rounds as functioning balanced negatives, societies need personal liberty *and* economic stability to prosper.

Russian-American novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand noted that, “In any compromise between food and poison, it is only death that can win. In any compromise between good and evil, it is only evil that can profit.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Resolutional kritiks will most definitely (defiantly?) be popular this year, with debaters left and right arguing that “personal freedom” is too ambiguous to conflict with economic security. Through the lens of personal finance and financial decisions that directly relate and influence economic stability, however, conflict is sure to ensue. If and when they conflict, which should be compromised: personal freedom and finance, or economic security and stability?

The fate of a fawn lies in your hands.

Further Reading

*The Law –* Bastiat

*The Road to Serfdom* - Hayek

*Common Sense Economics* - Gwartney, Stroup, Lee, and Ferrarini

*2011 Index of Economic Freedom* - Heritage Foundation

Dave Ramsey on personal finances - www.daveramsey.com

Capitalism

A Love-Hate Relationship

by Chase Harrington

Batman is, without a doubt, my favorite superhero. Growing up, I could never stand icons like Superman who possess so many powers that the fight seems easy. I instead admired the Gotham Crusader because he uses tools and equipment to fight evil. As debaters, we can take a lesson from Batman. If you imagine knowledge about a variety of topics as tools to employ when locked in verbal battle against evil (you know, that one competitor who always beats you), then you know you want a utility belt with the right tools, or arguments, for the job. This year, some of the most powerful arguments on both sides of the resolution will revolve around the debater’s knowledge of capitalism. In an economic context, personal freedom is virtually the equivalent of capitalism. Additionally, economic security can be easily linked to socialism, communism, or at the very least, anti-capitalistic measures. The debater who can provide a barrage of compelling arguments against the foundation of an opponent’s economic philosophy, whether that is an unbridled free market or a government controlled one, will be a powerful competitor this year. So in this introduction to capitalism, I will first define and distinguish the terms, present a Christian outlook to the issue, discuss ways of linking capitalism to the resolution, and finally present arguments in favor of and against capitalism.

Important terms: Defined and Distinguished

Capitalism:

“An economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, characterized by a free competitive market and motivation by profit.”

-Encarta® World English Dictionary, North American Edition.

“An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.”

-Oxford Language Dictionaries Online.

Social Market:

“An economic system in which industry and commerce are run by private enterprise within limits set by the government to ensure equality of opportunity and social and environmental responsibility”

-Collins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition

Socialism:

“Any economic or political system based on government ownership and control of important businesses and methods of production”.

-Cambridge Dictionary of American English

Communism:

“A system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian party holds power, claiming to make progress toward a higher social order in which all goods are equally shared by the people.”

- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

While there are dozens of variations and combinations of the four terms listed above, they are all you should need to understand for the time being. Capitalism, as you hopefully noticed, is primarily two things: private ownership-driven production with no government interference or regulation, and a competitive profit-driven distribution of goods and services. Communism is the opposite of capitalism. Communism operates where the government owns all wealth and redistributes it. Capitalism gives the individual massive amounts of power, whereas communism gives the group that power. The social market and socialism are both in between these two ends of the spectrum. The social market essentially is capitalism, but restrained to prevent things like atrocious abuses of human dignity and environmental devastation. This is the system that most resembles the United States traditionally. Socialism is further increased government control, typically in sectors considered too “big to fail” or too important to be left to profit incentive decision-making (Healthcare for example). More importantly, socialism is what Karl Marx considered to be the transitional phase from capitalism to communism. Marxism holds that capitalism will eventually destroy itself and reduce everyone to poverty. Frederick Engles, one of the fathers of communism, writes in Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, “Whilst the capitalistic mode of production more and more completely transforms the great majority of the populations into proletarians, it creates power which, under penalty of its own destruction, is forced to accomplish this revolution… [Eventually] the proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into state property” (Engles, 69). In summary, capitalism is privately owned production of goods bought and sold through competitive free market. The social market is a government-restrained form of capitalism for ethical and maintenance reasons. Socialism is even more government regulations and provisions, and in Marxian philosophy, a transition from capitalism to communism. Communism is opposite of capitalism, with everything being owned collectively or by an authoritarian government who is responsible to redistribute wealth.

The Christian Perspective

For the most part, there is not one. The Bible is concerned with things of far greater importance then economics. The Bible instructs Christians to behave in an economic system with honesty and fairness (Leviticus 19:35, Proverbs 11:1, Micah 6:10-11) instead of discussing modes of production. I do want to discuss how the economic systems previously discussed and compared line up to scripture, and there are a few guidelines that the Bible does give us. My intention in examining this aspect of capitalism, however, is not so you can quote the Bible and win debates. Rather it is first so that you will not be taken “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” (Col 2:8 NIV) My second purpose in this tangent is so that you will not lose to those who would trivialize God’s word to win a competition.

First, it is good to know that some economic systems line up more closely with scripture then others. Now when it comes to economics, Christians are usually in one of two camps. The socialist camp usually bases its claims off of Acts 2:44-45 where early Christians are described as sharing resources and working for a collective body. However, the context of this passage (Body of Christ) is usually disregarded. Additionally, they also ignore Acts 2:46-47 and Acts 5:1-4 which describes Christians as owning homes and freely selling their private property. Interestingly, even Engles was aghast that some would link Christianity with communism. He writes, “[I]f some few passages of the Bible may be favourable to Communism, the general spirit of its docrtrines is, nevertheless, totally opposed to it.” (Engles, 3:399) The other camp is predominantly capitalist whose members would cite that God gave men the right to own property (Exodus 20:15) and respects a system where hard labor is rewarded (Proverbs 31, Ephesians 4:28). It is important to note though that capitalism itself is far from perfect, as we will examine later. That said, if Christianity had an economic recipe, it would be all the private property and the individual value that comes with capitalism, along with a measure of stewardship for the resources God has given us (Genesis 1:26-28), a dose of fairness, and a cup of charitable giving (Proverbs 3:27-28). The point is this: the Bible does not endorse either personal freedom or economic security. Any economic model coming close to Biblical standards will never be seen on earth. Just as it is wrong and indeed absurd when some Christians insist that loving God and being saved means you also have to be a republican, so too it is foolish to say God is a capitalist or a socialist. Use principles in scripture to guide your politics and philosophies, but do not reduce God by placing his divine and ultimate approval on a man-made idea. More importantly, do not reduce God to a man-made philosophy to win a debate round. Rather, use the knowledge you learn through debate to be a responsible citizen in our democratic nation, and speak intelligently on what you believe as an ambassador for Christ.

Linking Capitalism to the Resolution

There are two essential parts to a good Lincoln Douglas argument: the link and the impact. If you do not know what I mean by this, you are probably just not familiar with the terminology. For example, if I want to attack the philosophy of pragmatism and say that it devalues human dignity, I would phrase my argument like this: “Pragmatism views reality in terms of material results and consequences, and it cannot comprehend such ideas as innate value or intrinsic worth which are not related to usefulness (Link). This means that pragmatism, when applied to humans, will not see beings with rights demanding certain dignities, but instead as instruments of labor (Impact).” Now that we understand what I mean by link, let us see how capitalism relates to this year’s topic!

Capitalism heavily falls into the personal freedom side of the resolution. There are two specific reasons for this:

First, personal freedom and capitalism endorse the value of an individual. This is because both philosophies hold that the individual should be independent and free from arbitrary social controls. If you have the right to buy, sell and own property, you also can have the right to speak freely, practice whatever religion you want, and have a say in who governs you. In fact, because capitalism furthered personal freedom and upheld the value of an individual, philosopher Ayn Rand proclaimed that is was the only moral system of production. In her work Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, Rand declares,

“In a capitalist society, all human relationships are voluntary. Men are free to cooperate or not, to deal with one another or not, as their own individual judgments, convictions, and interests dictate…It is the institution of private property that protects and implements the right to disagree—and thus keeps the road open to man’s most valuable attribute (valuable personally, socially, and objectively): the creative mind.” (Rand, 19)

Secondly, capitalism and personal freedom reject group interference or restraint and refuse to be shackled by regulation. Capitalism is literally personal freedom in an economic context. Ronald Nash writes in his work, Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism,

“One dominant feature of capitalism is economic freedom, the right of people to exchange things voluntarily, free from force, fraud, and theft. Capitalism is more then this of course, but its concern with free exchange is obvious. Socialism on the other hand, seeks to replace the freedom of the market with a group of central planners who exercise control over essential market functions.” (Nash, 63) [Emphasis mine]

Those should be two good starts for developing links between capitalism and personal freedom.

Now let us examine economic security. This is a less obvious, but still valid link to the capitalism debate. Economic security would at least endorse a social market model, definitely socialism, and possibly even communism. There are three specific arguments here:

First, capitalism is unsustainable. It is only a matter of time before private or corporate profit incentives make the market an impossible place to do business. One of the key steps the US took that transitioned us from your everyday capitalism to a social market system was the implementation of Anti-trust laws. Anti-trust laws are laws that break up monopolies when they begin to smother competition. Secondly, capitalism may jeopardize economic stability. This is because capitalism is driven by unlimited growth from the consumption of finite resources. This also means that pursuing the most profitable avenue may appear to be good in the short term, but in the long term, it is damaging to our economic security. America’s reliance on foreign oil is a powerful example here. If economic security were valued over capitalistic venture (personal freedom), then American would invest more in developing solutions to our oil addiction. It would also likely fuel this research through government grants paid for by taxpayers. This leads me to link number three, redistribution of wealth. Economic security values the group over the individual, so it is totally justifiable to take more money from individuals to benefit the group as a whole. Economists favoring government regulations on the market place and centralization of banks often hold these views in order to keep the economy secure. English economist John Maynard Keynes is one of the most prominent who have held the view.

Now that you understand these economic ideas, their distinctions, and how they can be linked to this years resolution, (unless you just skipped to this point in the article) let us examine the powerful arguments we can use.

Capitalism Good

1) Capitalism Funds International Aid Groups that Save Millions of Lives.

Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, Direct Relief International, and thousands of other international aid organizations are fueled by capitalism. Corporations like FedEx and Exxon Mobile donated over 298.3 million dollars to the crisis in Japan (Business Civic Leadership Center). Additionally, according to the American Association Fundraising Counsel (AAFRC), 75.6% of all charitable giving in 2004 came from individuals, not governments or grants. Through the wealth capitalism generates, millions of lives have been saved worldwide.

2) Capitalism Advances Medical Research.

Virtually every breakthrough in medical science has come from a capitalist country. Capitalism is vital because it provides market incentives for people to research and mass-produce vaccines and medicines. Billions of people would be dying from diseases like small pox, whopping cough, and even the common cold if it were not for the capitalist countries developing cures and treatments to these diseases.

3) Capitalism is key to combating poverty.

It is businesses and the private sector, not governments, that must combat global poverty. A key way this is happening is through micro loans. Micro loans have successfully helped people in Haiti and India climb out of poverty and create a better life for themselves and their community. 1 in 5 people worldwide live on less then a dollar per day, but 16 million people have been lifted out of poverty through micro financing. World Vision, for example, reports having loaned over 1.8 billion dollars to around 3.5 million people. This has created over 100,000 jobs in 2010 and impacted 1.86 million children.

4) Capitalism preserves resources through Biotechnology.

Capitalism drives research in agriculture and biochemistry, key areas if mankind is to produce more energy on fewer resources. BIO.org, the worlds largest biotech organization, reports that biotechnology in agriculture has led to the use of less pesticides, increased food production at less cost, more efficient use of farmland, and more nutritious foods. This advances are key to wisely using our natural resources. According to the Department of Biological Sciences at Illinois State University, “Financial investment from private sources currently drives much of the research and development in the field of biotechnology. This investment is based on the expectation of eventual financial gain as useful products enter the marketplace.” If it were not for that “dirty rotten capitalist,” none of these advances would have been possible.

5) Capitalism protects the environment through the building of environmental reserves.

Endangered plants and animals are best served by a capitalist economy. In fact, none of the socialistic or communistic countries have ever made significant efforts to take care of the environment. The former USSR actually wreaked environmental devastation on Russia. Places like the San Diego Wild Animal Park and Sea World demonstrate the ability of capitalistic ingenuity to protect the environment to earn a profit.

6) Capitalism protects the environment through Ecotourism.

Ecotourism is the market serving travel to natural wildlife conservations. For example, in Peru, a region called Madre de Dios has experienced a “boom” in ecotourism, according to the Economist April 10th, 2008. They report, “Rainforest Expeditions, the company that runs Posada Amazonas, is the biggest tourism operator in the region, hosting a quarter of the tourist nights spent there. Founded in 1989, its goal was, and still is, to use tourism to foster conservation.” This company has left the environment unspoiled, and given 60% of the profit to the indigenous peoples who live there. Through ecotourism, it turns out the capitalism may actually be the solution to dwindling rainforests.

7) Capitalism is necessary to fund crucial innovation.

Capitalism is responsible to researchers and companies developing hybrid cars, solar panels, and renewable energy sources. You would hard-pressed to find examples of innovation in socialistic countries, as they have little motivation to create. However, with environmentalism having so much political and social power these days, companies are incentivized to discover more efficient and environment friendly means of producing profits.

Capitalism Bad

*NOTE: Stoa is still a staunchly conservative league full of judges comfortable intervening in rounds by voting against debaters who ran ideas they personally disagree with. To avoid this, remind your judge that personal freedom and laissez faire capitalism is not the model of the US, and that you can support private property and profit incentives without supporting anarco-capitalism. It is all in the wording.*

1) Capitalism strips humans of value and worth.

Capitalism sees and cares only about profits, and when that philosophy is applied to humans, the results can be heart wrenching. Millions of people have bought and sold as slaves because of capitalism. Child labor/slavery involving the poorest of working conditions is still prevalent worldwide. According to Compassion.com, a non-profit charity specializing in child poverty, 126 million children work in hazardous conditions, are beaten, and abused. Even companies like Nike have been caught using sweatshop labor to produce their products as cheaply as possible and thus maximize profit.

2) Capitalism destroys the environment.

Capitalism is based off the expansion and reckless consumption of finite resources. This is sucking our planet dry of oil, reducing usable farmland to dust, and ruining wildlife habitats. There is no greater exposure to the danger of capitalism the BP oil spill in April 2010. Though BP was warned by the Minerals Management Service multiple times as far back as 2009 that its equipment was not safe for deep ocean drilling, (according to Mother Jones, June 1st 2010) capitalist greed overshadowed safety concerns and now 170 million gallons of oil is destroying gulf wildlife and, ironically, also the local fishing economies and ecotourism. Additionally, the dangerous extraction of finite resources is a key contributor to climate change. According to Friends of the Earth International April 21st 2010, “President Evo Morales of Bolivia diagnosed the root cause of climate change as being capitalism… He added that in the last 100 years, developed countries with 20% of the world’s population have generated over 76% of carbon emissions responsible for climate change. ‘Capitalism merchandises everything. It seeks continual expansion. The system needs to be changed. We have to choose between change or death.’”

3) Capitalism oppresses women and minorities.

Capitalism thrives on the exploitation of others. While it does not automatically create prejudices, it does wield them do its advantage. The founding charter of Working Marxism, a communist group based in Sweden explains,

“…the capitalist class can rely on the established social structures and traditions of gender-specific, national/racist, …and age-linked oppression, which have existed in different forms in former class societies as well. They did not disappear through capitalism but have been modified in a way that is suitable for bourgeois class interest. Within capitalism the oppression of women has reached its most developed form” (Principles of Arbeitsgruppe Marxismus, 1)

This accounts for phenomenon like the feminization of poverty, and why women make up the majority of people living on less then a dollar per day.

4) Capitalism creates massive wealth gaps.

Capitalism creates massive wealth gaps because it is driven by competition. In this competition, winners accumulate more wealth and keep winning, often at the expense of the less fortunate. Albert Einstein once observed in an article entitles “Why Socialism?” in the Monthly Review, 1949,

“Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society.” It is these wealth gaps that have been entrenched in our society by capitalism that harm the social mobility, and dignity of millions worldwide.”

The vicious cycle capitalism creates only leads to workers getting exploited more and more. As one end of the spectrum accumulates riches, the other accumulates poverty and toil.

5) Capitalism leads to resources wars.

As capitalism leads to corporations extracting more and more finite resources from our planet, certain commodities become so valuable that leaders, armies, and governments will do whatever it takes to obtain them. In our world, that substance is oil. Specifically, I want to highlight the conflict in the Niger Delta region. The bottom tip of the country of Niger is exceedingly oil-rich, which has unfortunately resulted in western oil companies like Shell completely overrunning this area, one of the most densely populated in the world. Oil companies pumped billions of dollars of revenue out of the ground, and in the process destroyed the fishing ecosystem, soiled the drinking water, and created horrifying living conditions for the people there. In January 2006, a militant group named Ijaw overran the Shell oil facility and took several workers hostage. This group soon began blowing up oil pipelines, killing more people and taking more hostages. Soon the Nigerian military got involved and, according to Pambazuka News June 1st 2006, the area erupted into a massacre, leaving nearly 2,500 civilians dead, most of whom were women and children.

6) Capitalism corrupts governments.

When capitalism inevitably creates massive wealth and power divides, the ruling class can exert immense control over democracies. Big oil and pharmaceutical companies spend tens of millions of dollars each year keeping their politicians in power. Just looking at big oil special interest donations, the Public Campaign Action Fund reports that “House members who voted to continue the subsidies [to oil companies] received, on average, five times more money in 2010 from oil and gas interests…16 of the 18 U.S. House members that received over $100,000 in campaign contributions from the industry in 2010 voted to block debate. One voted to proceed and a second did not vote.” Corporate interests are literally buying American democracy.

Closing

That was a lot of information, but now you are equipped to intelligently discuss one of the oldest debate topics out there, and especially use it to your advantage when debating this year’s resolution. Like the tools on Batman’s utility belt, “capitalism good” and “capitalism bad” arguments are essentials in the arsenal of a debater. Use them wisely, and they will serve you well, in life and in Lincoln Douglas debate.

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Protect Us! Just… Not Too Much

The Eternal Paradox of Government Regulation

by Shane Baumgardner

We’ve all had one of those moments. Maybe it’s a cold winter day and you’re going sledding. Or maybe you want to go play tackle football like all the other kids. Or maybe it’s that whole tub of ice cream that looks like it was made for you to consume in its entirety. You probably already know what comes next; mom steps in to “protect” you. She bundles you up like you’re headed for the South Pole and, although you won’t be catching a cold anytime soon, you can’t move your arms or legs, making you a sitting duck in the ensuing snowball fight. Or she stops you from joining the tackle football game, nothing harmful there, right? I mean it’s not like everyone now thinks you’re a total wimp or anything. Nah. Surely not. And then there are the times where your mom steps in and deprives you of the delectable life experience of consuming an entire tub of ice cream. I mean yeah, sure, there’s that little issue of the massive stomach illness she just prevented, but still, it’s *ice cream*.

It really all comes down to this: we want our moms to protect us… just not too much. We understand that there’s a need for rules, and we appreciate it when our moms save us from extreme pain and suffering. Until, that is, their rules come into conflict with what we perceive as our happiness. This is the same basic problem that we have with government. Everyone wants the government to protect them to some degree; it’s just a question of what degree that is. For some, that’s only from foreign military threats. Others extend that to domestic criminals and vagabonds. Still others will broaden it further to protection from dishonest businessmen. As we continue down the path of government regulation, we find a group of people that expects the government to protect them from unusually cruel outcomes in life. These people want the government to act as some kind of “safety net” to prevent them from living in total poverty, save them from having to work until they die, and make sure that their food isn’t contaminated.

Now lest you think that the last group of people we discussed in that paragraph are total yahoos or, worse yet, (dramatic music) socialists, realize that you, or at least the vast majority of people in the United States, fall into that last category. We expect the government to prevent us from starving in the streets (welfare). We expect to be able to retire before we die and, for most Americans, that wouldn’t be a reality without Social Security. We also expect not to die because we ate bad food. Americans are so serious about the safety of our food that we created an entire government agency to make sure it’s safe, the Food and Drug Administration. [[83]](#footnote-83) So before you dismiss either side of the government regulation debate, take a closer look, do a little digging, and realize that this is complex issue with compelling points on both sides.

So how much is too much? Is there a line that the government shouldn’t cross? If so, what is that line? These are the questions that we are going to explore in the rest of this article. We’re going to examine two main positions on government regulation, Laissez-Faire thought and the Social Minimum position.

Laissez-Faire

AKA the “rub some dirt on it, it builds character!” mom

We all know someone with a mom like this. The mom that insists that a child will only learn its lesson if it experiences the consequences of its actions. This is the mom that shakes her head and says, “I told you not to do that” as her child screams in pain from putting its hand on a searing hot stove. This is the mom that says “if you stay in my house for more than a week after you’re 20, I WILL shoot you, and no one will blame me,” and means it. This mom lets her child do whatever it wants, trusting that, eventually, the child will understand that if something hurts really bad then they shouldn’t do that something. She seems harsh, cruel and possibly even sadistic, but she does what she does out of love (or at least that’s what she claims). What others see as negligence, she defends as letting her child learn the lessons of life. Some call it unnecessary pain; she calls it “character building”.

This mother is the parental embodiment of a laissez-faire view of government regulation of the economy. Laissez-faire economics is really an incredibly simple concept at its core. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as a “policy of minimum governmental interference in the economic affairs of individuals and society”[[84]](#footnote-84). Essentially, the government should stay out of the economy as much as possible. We’re going to examine this viewpoint first in its provisions for government regulation of the economy and secondly in its position on social “safety nets”.

Regulation

This philosophy finds its best justification on the issue of regulation in the work of Adam Smith, who argues that the economy works because everyone is guided by the “invisible hand” of self-interest, leading to the most productive use of resources. (Side note: Unfortunately, we only have time for that brutally simplistic summary of Smith’s work in this article. I highly encourage you to do more research on his ideas and writings before you begin debating this season.) The idea that everyone will act in his or her own best interest solves for most government regulation, so laissez-faire economists say. The technical term for this is a self-regulating perfect market situation. Ph.D. Nicklas Lundblad would define this as “[a market situation] where the rules of supply and demand eradicate any possible problems.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

The crux of this argument is best understood in an example. Let’s say that your friend buys meat from a certain company and eats it. The following day your friend dies and the medical examiners say that the meat caused it. You probably won’t buy meat from that company anymore, right? That seems beyond the obvious, but it leads us to several other important conclusions. The first is that people don’t like buying bad products. Period. If you make things that hurt people, those people will not want to buy your products. That means that, theoretically, the laws of supply and demand will weed out bad products. The second important conclusion is that companies have an incentive to produce products that will not hurt people. Essentially, if sales go down when your products hurt people, then it’s in your best interest to make sure that products don’t hurt people. Some laissez-faire economists take these facts and conclude that there is little to no need for government regulation.

There are two primary problems with this view of regulation, however. The first is that, in order for the system to work on the consumer side, someone has to get hurt. Take the example we were working with earlier. Even if your friend is the only victim and the incident results in that meat company going out of business, both of which are rather extreme conditions to assume, your friend is dead. The company can’t fix that and the free market doesn’t solve for it. Proponents of government regulation argue that a system of oversight can prevent that harm for occurring in the first place. Whether that holds true in the real world or not is a little bit of a different matter. However, most people would prefer a system that regulates bad products without someone getting hurt. That’s just common sense. Many proponents of a laissez-faire system would argue that, while desirable, preventing these problems is an impossibility. People must simply learn from their mistakes or, in some cases, the mistakes of others.

The second problem that exists within the laissez-faire system is that sometimes the incentive for a company to not cause harm is not strong enough to outweigh the benefits of risky practices. This is maybe best seen in environmental regulation. The Economist, a British news magazine, explains that sometimes the producer doesn’t pay for the costs of producing a product. Take, for instance, air pollution; the owner of a factory doesn’t necessarily pay the clean up costs for polluting. This leads to a “market failure” known as an externality, where the real cost of production isn’t taken into account by the producer. [[86]](#footnote-86) In the case of air pollution, there’s almost no incentive for the company to stop the harmful behavior. After all, it’s not their specific product causing the harm; it’s a byproduct of production. That makes it very difficult for consumers to trace it back to the original cause. The consumer just sees smog and notices an increase in respiratory illness, there’s no clear link between the company and the harm. That means harmful products don’t experience the decline in demand that is necessary for laissez-faire to weed them out. This means that businessperson can be acting in their own self-interest (maximizing profits) and end up harming the greater good. This is perhaps the greatest justification for extended government regulation in the economy. After all, if market failures like this exist in the real world, we have to address them through a means other than laissez-faire. The question then becomes where to draw the line on these regulations. Laissez-faire maintains that these regulations are dangerous, ineffective, and cause inefficiencies in the economy, and thus should be used only in the most extreme of circumstances.

Safety Nets

When it comes to the idea of social “safety nets” laissez-faire is cautious at best. Like the mom who is afraid that her child will live with her until it’s grown to be 40, laissez-faire fears that safety nets will remove the incentive to work. It also eats away at the basic idea that everyone should be held responsible for their own actions, and that the free-market does just that. In essence, laissez-faire believes that failure and poverty are powerful incentives to work. If you end up in poverty, you have gotten what you deserve. To soften those incentives with safety nets is both dangerous and counterproductive.

When you start with basic premises like those, it is difficult to justify expansive safety net policies. As a result, many laissez-faire economists either don’t believe in government run safety nets at all (arguing that is instead the role of private charity) or believe in incredibly limited safety nets. Proponents of this position argue that even when safety nets are provided they ought not harm the incentive to work. This can be accomplished in any number of ways, but Ph.D. Anna Yeatman explains a common view of laissez-faire in her article “Social Policy, Freedom and Individuality.” Professor Yeatman states laissez-faire philosophy holds that “The provision of public welfare is designed so as to punish the able-bodied non-working poor for their failure in self-reliance.”[[87]](#footnote-87) So even though there is a “safety net” it ought to be designed in such a way that it punishes those who rely on it so that they still have an incentive to work.

Laissez-faire justifies these kinds of views on the basis of fairness. After all, if economy without government really is pure competition, and you really can succeed if you just put your mind to it, then we are left with the conclusion that the poor deserve to be poor. If that’s the case, it is not our job to lift them up out of poverty or make the circumstances that they have earned more bearable. In fact, we would be harming them if we interfered, as we would be preventing them from learning their lesson, crippling them for life. So runs the argument of laissez-faire.

Once again, laissez-faire runs into an argument about how realistic its expectations really are. We’ve all seen good people go through bad things, sometimes without deserving it at all. There are times where no mater how hard you work or how dedicated to your job you are, you still get laid off. Is it really fair to say that every economic outcome, good or bad, is deserved? And if the economy isn’t the gold standard of fairness, if bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people, wouldn’t we want some kind of viable safety net? Just in case we were one of those good people who draws a bad outcome?

Summary

Laissez-Faire sounds like a perfectly fair and very efficient system in theory. In application, however, it runs into some serious difficulties. So we’re left with the question, how much security does self-interest really provide us with? And if we can’t trust self-interest to regulate the economy, does government then need to have a role? Certainly the efficiency of laissez-faire makes a strong case for minimal government involvement, but is the efficiency enough to justify the risk of severe harm?

These questions are difficult ones to answer and they prompted the growth of a new philosophy on government involvement in the economy, the theory of a Social Minimum.

Social Minimum

AKA the “Oh honey let me help!” mom

These moms are conflicted. They’re the type that read about 7 billion parenting books before they even have a kid. They want to make sure their child has every advantage possible. She tries to control every aspect of the baby’s early childhood, plays baby Mozart and tries to teach it how to read before it can eat solid food. As the child grows up, this mom struggles mightily with giving her child enough freedom to “grow up” while wanting to protect it from every possible ill. Tackle football? Not so much. Sleepover at a friend’s? Only if you take every medication known to mankind because you just *might* need it. Even after her child is all grown up, this mom still wants to be involved in its life. She reminds it over and over again that she’s always there as a support, that if the child ever has any trouble they just need to call mommy and she’ll take care of it. She even tells her grown child that it can move back in if it ever needs to. She’s always there to offer her advice (solicited or not) and still tries to control her child long after it has left home.

This is the quintessential modern mom, right? The “I’m always there for you! Let me help you!” mom. Many see her as responsible, loving, and dedicated to her child. Some, however, criticize her. They say that she is crippling her child for life by sheltering and protecting it to the point that the child will never actually grow up.

She is also the embodiment of the idea of a Social Minimum mindset when it comes to regulation and safety nets. The Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy describes the concept of a Social Minimum like this: “‘People should not be allowed to starve in the streets.’ ‘No one should be denied access to a decent minimum of health-care.’ ‘Every citizen should be able to meet his or her basic needs.’ These statements all express a widespread view that a political community should seek to ensure that its members are all able to enjoy at least a minimally decent standard of living. They assert the importance of what is often called the social minimum.”[[88]](#footnote-88) Simply put, it is the idea that the government should in some way guarantee that avoidable evils do not befall its citizens. This can be accomplished through two primary tools, regulation and safety nets. We’re going to take a look at how this position uses each of those tools and examine the benefits and disadvantages to this philosophy.

Regulation

The way that safety nets would be used to achieve a social minimum seems obvious. After all, the best way to assure that people don’t starve in the streets is to make sure that they are given food. The best way to keep them from dying from curable diseases is to make healthcare available to them. The role of a safety net is simple, obvious, and easy to understand. So where does regulation come in? Well, when the government takes it upon itself to prevent its citizens from suffering basic, preventable evils, it quickly finds itself on a slippery slope of addressing a lot more problems than seem immediately apparent. Think about the issue of starvation, for instance. The solution to preventing starvation seems to be incredibly simple: give them food. But consider this— what good does giving the food to the poor do if that food is contaminated? Rather than dying a slow, agonizing death from starvation, they now die a quicker, but still agonizing, death from disease. Now the government has to use the tool of regulation along with safety nets to maintain the concept of a social minimum.

The need for regulation to maintain a social minimum becomes even more necessary when you consider that most poor products and potentially dangerous manufacturing processes affect the poorest of a society. After all, the rich have the money to pay for quality goods and services, but the poor don’t. This means that companies will naturally have to try to slash costs during production because their customer base simply cannot pay as much. Without oversight, a business that is focused on profit-maximization (self interest) may begin to cut corners, possibly to the detriment of innocent people. The poor are far more exposed to these types of risks.

The risk of contamination in the environment is even greater for the poor. Take for example water contamination. In 2010, the United Nations reported that water contamination is at an all time high, and the poor are paying the price.[[89]](#footnote-89) If you think about it, this makes perfect sense. The poor are more likely to live in industrial areas where factories dump their waste. They are also far more likely to draw water from subpar water sources, as opposed to the rich who can afford to pick and choose their source of water. And if you are poor, you simply cannot afford a water filtration system to protect you from contamination.

Since a government that is committed to policies that uphold a social minimum is concerned with how the lowest classes live and instituting policies that keep them above a certain level, they have to be concerned with regulating contamination and dangerous products. Otherwise, any of their efforts to help the poor will simply be undermined by the harsh realities of living in the lower class. These regulations manifest themselves all over the economy. In the US, for example, we have standards for ambient air, drinking water, food, medicine and any number of other substances. These regulations are aimed at stopping basic, preventable evils from occurring with the goal of making life more livable, especially for the lower classes, thereby creating some minimum quality of life throughout the country.

There are a lot of problems with this mindset, however. First, and most obvious, is the problem of where government regulation stops. How far is too far? If we are looking at stopping preventable evils, does that mean keeping us from taking unnecessary risks? The idea of a social minimum can be a slippery slope towards a nanny state, and no one likes a mom who is constantly looking over their shoulder. Many also question the effectiveness of these regulations. After all, we have the FDA for no other purpose than preventing people from getting sick from bad foods and prescription drugs, and yet people still get sick and die from those very things. And then there’s the issue of cost, first to the taxpayer to fund regulatory agencies, and secondly to business to make sure that they are in compliance with the rules. Like we talked about earlier, businesses that would not be compliant with these rules are that way because they are trying to cut costs and maximize profits. When you remove the opportunity to cut costs through risky practices, businesses profits will go down, and that can lead to a host of problems. Everything from higher unemployment to a full out recession can result from excessive government regulation. Some very conservative laissez-faire economists even take issue with the idea of government regulation at all. They say that it’s not the government’s place to regulate the market and doing so, even when the regulations are “successful,” causes more harm than good.

In the end, the issue of regulation all comes down to whether you believe the government should use its power to prevent harm from occurring in our every day lives. If your answer is yes, you likely fall on the side of regulation. If your answer is no, you probably do not believe in regulation. But no matter how you look at it, government regulation of the economy can definitely be a dangerous tool.

Safety Nets

Safety nets are the most obvious way to ensure a social minimum. Essentially, the idea of an economic safety net is that government should provide some sort of support and assistance to those in the lower classes. This is especially important when it comes to those who have no, or at least very little, income. Welfare is a common, and commonly criticized, safety net that often takes the form of cash payments to those who cannot afford to support themselves. A program like this ensures a base level of income for everyone in the entire nation. So long as you apply for the program, you will never make less than the amount of welfare that the government assigns you. When you think about it, this is the most basic form of a social minimum, guaranteeing a minimum amount of wealth for everyone. Welfare is a safety net program because it is only given to those who cannot or will not support themselves without assistance. Welfare should, for all intents and purposes, eliminate the issue of starvation within a country. It should also either completely eradicate or at least make a significant dent in homelessness. The basic idea is to ensure that everyone has enough to live a decent, human life.

Other safety nets are more complex and more expansive. Social security, for instance, attempts to guarantee retirement and support for the elderly. In the case of social security, however, every worker is a recipient. It doesn’t matter if you’re a millionaire or a pauper, so long as you worked the required time you can claim social security when you reach retirement age. Once again, the idea is that everyone within the society should have some baseline income that they can draw on in their old age. Medicaid and Medicare represent yet another set of safety nets in our country. Their intent is to give the underprivileged and elderly access to basic healthcare services. These policies further advance the idea that we ought to be preventing basic evils that are within our power to prevent. Programs like unemployment insurance allow those who have lost their job to have some time in order to find a new one before the harsh reality of unemployment sets in. The list goes on and on. Modern society is full of these social safety net policies. All of these programs differ in how they address the issues of poverty and bad luck, but they all have the same basic motivating principle: a social minimum.

Just like regulations, these programs are more important to the lower classes than anyone else. The bottom line is that the poor simply cannot afford to insulate themselves from the potential risks of the real world. If you’re well off you probably have health insurance, which means you pay only a fraction of your medical bills. Many in the lower classes can’t afford that type of coverage, which means that when they go to the doctor they are in for a huge dose of sticker shock. Many families in the middle and upper classes carry life insurance on their breadwinners, so if one of your parents dies, your family will still have money to live. Once again, however, most of the poor live without that type of security. If their breadwinner dies or is no longer capable of working, they are left totally destitute. The question then becomes whether society should attempt to insulate the lower classes from the things they simply can’t protect themselves from. The policy decisions of a social minimum are based on answering that question with a yes. Policy decisions from other perspectives tend to answer that question with a no.

Assuming responsibility for such a massive task leads to a whole mess of problems. First and foremost is cost. Someone has to pay for these programs and, by definition, it won’t be their recipients. That leaves us with the hard truth: the better off members of society will be forced to support their worse off counterparts. Not only does that drain their pockets, but it also raises a major question of fairness. Is it really fair to put the cost of the failures of one group of people on another group? Many would say no. Those in the laissez-faire school get particularly prickly when it comes to this issue. They say that each individual is responsible for his or her own outcomes in life. If they fail they deserve the consequences of failure, and if they succeed then they deserve to enjoy the benefits of their success. Government should not act as an equalizing agent that tries to mitigate the pain of failure and the fruits of success.

That last point leads us to possibly the biggest argument against safety nets: they lead to abuse and remove the incentive to work. It is almost universally recognized that welfare and other safety nets are open to abuse. The Common Wealth Foundation reported in 2010 that, in the state of Pennsylvania alone, medical safety net fraud could account for hundreds of millions of dollars. They say there are millions more in waste to be found in conventional welfare programs as well.[[90]](#footnote-90) This abuse means that those that don’t need assistance are receiving it. From that point, the link to a lack of incentive to work is clear. Why work if you can obtain assistance from the government for nothing at all? When you have no threat of complete poverty, what need is there to work hard? What are you avoiding? Proponents of safety nets say that there is still the incentive of success. But is that really enough? Is it possible that with the vast array of safety nets we have in place some people are deciding that the cost of work simply isn’t worth the benefit of a small increase in income?

Summary

The idea of a social minimum, just like laissez-fair, sounds great on paper. No one wants to see people suffer. Regulation and safety nets seem like a reasonable way to prevent that suffering. But, also like laissez-faire, the issue becomes more complicated when we look at its application in the real world. Regulation can certainly be a useful tool, but it can also kill jobs and harm business and lead us down the road to a nanny state. Safety nets are an appealing option until we realize they bring with them the massive issues of cost, fairness and abuse.

And so, like the mother who struggles to find the balance between protecting her child and letting it grow up, governments that pursue a philosophy of social minimums are caught in an eternal balancing act. Are the benefits of security worth the costs? There are reasonable ways to answer that question with both a yes and a no.

Conclusion

So how does this all relate to the resolution? Most of the economic philosophies on regulation and safety nets you will see this year will come from one of these two mindsets. It’s important that you know the logic behind each side so that you can easily identify them when they are brought up during a round. It’s also crucial that you understand the strengths and weaknesses of each position as well. When you hear someone arguing for laissez-faire policies, you should now know to attack how realistic those policies really are and whether they expose the most vulnerable members of society to unacceptable levels of risk. If you hear someone promoting a social minimum, you should now know to ask where they want to stop the slippery slope of regulation and safety nets and how they plan to support such a costly course of action.

At the end of the day, both sides have significant flaws. This is an incredibly complex issue that may not have a “right” or “wrong” answer. Just like parenting, it’s tough to know how much is enough and how much is too much. Your mom doesn’t want you living out of her basement for the rest of your life and the government doesn’t want you on welfare forever. The government doesn’t want you to be homeless and completely destitute, and your mom doesn’t want you to break every bone in your body. The question is not what we want, its how we get there without causing more problems. So goes the eternal paradox of government regulation.

Getting What You Deserve

Self-Interest in Freedom and Economics

by Elizabeth Ertle

My parents seldom watch TV, but when they do, they’ll usually opt to watch either the show *Survivor* or *The Amazing Race.* Interestingly, these shows share a common theme: every man for himself. Competitors will form teams and make alliances, but in the end, every individual is striving to stay on top of everyone else. Whatever good will there may be, there exists a mutual understanding that everyone is an opponent; everyone will seek to accomplish whatever is best for themselves. Although such shows are new, the concept they employ to motivate the contestants is one that has been around for centuries: that of self-interest.

Self-interest is the idea that, when unrestricted, people will pursue what they think to be best for themselves. Merriam-Webster defines self-interest as “a concern for one’s own action and well-being.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Self-interest is the starting point and driving factor for any economic action. An economy is the outgrowth of individual need, and is created to fulfill that need. As needs and wants grow, so does economic activity; as they shrink, the economy slows. Although some economic structures try to minimize the role of self-interest, it’s impossible to completely detach it from an economy. Self-interest is intriguing in this year’s resolution because it is tied to both personal freedom and economic security. It relies on personal freedom to be implemented, and, depending on your economic views, increasing self-interest either hurts or helps economic security. Self-interest is relevant to both sides of this year’s resolution, and can be used to support either side.

Embedded in capitalist ideology is the concept that when individuals have more freedom in their decisions, they tend to act in their own self-interest, and that through this self-interest they will generally promote the interest of the economy as a whole. Father of capitalism Adam Smith pioneered this idea in *Wealth of Nations,* saying that when an individual is involved in an economy, “[H]e intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.”[[92]](#footnote-92) Smith goes onto argue that it is more beneficial to society overall for an individual to simply pursue his own good, rather than a collective good to be the focus in economic exchanges.

Here’s how Smith’s assertion works: when an individual is responsible for himself, he tends to make the decisions will benefit him the most. A producer will produce goods that he can sell, and at a price that buyers will be able to afford. Consequently, the producer will offer goods that the consumer will want—goods that will actually benefit the consumer. This concept of self-interest assumes that forcing individuals to be responsible for their own well-being will force them to act in their own self-interest, and, generally, will create the best economic climate possible.

This concept is most concretely played out in early America. At its conception, America was weak economically; after relying on Great Britain for so many years, the American government initially struggled to create a working economy. In fact, for many years, America was on the verge of anarchy due to the economic instability that ensued. However, the founders remained firm in their commitment to individual liberty, and that eventually resulted in an explosion of economic growth. Just over a century after America had declared her independence from Great Britain, she surpassed most of the great economies of the world, to the point that the other powerful economies were heavily reliant on American goods. American inventions such as the cotton gin and steam engine were overnight successes; cross-country travel was enabled by mass railroad construction and newly dug canals. Cities were built around newly-constructed factories, mines, and mills. In a matter of decades, personal enterprise caused America to have an internationally influential economy. Economist Clarence B. Carson, PhD, analyzes the economic miracle by saying, “Much of this heady development could and should be ascribed to free enterprise. Most of the building had been done by private entrepreneurs—the factories, mines and mills… The inventions were the result of free enterprise, and their exploitation was usually undertaken by private entrepreneurs.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Although the government did play a role in creating a favorable economic climate, it was a minor one; the actual economic expansion occurred as a result of the self-interest of ambitious and unrestricted Americans.

Since the maximum freedom and *laissez faire* system of the 19th century, America has experimented a great deal with varying amounts of government involvement and regulations. A return to the concept of self-interest was witnessed in the 1980s, with the Reagan Administration pioneering lower taxes as the solution to the country’s economic woes. President Reagan asserted that by cutting the tax rate for the wealthy, the wealthy would have more disposable income. The theory went that the more disposable income existed in the economy, the more individuals would be able to pursue their own self-interest. If self-interest was pursued, the idea continued, the actions taken by the wealthy would eventually benefit others. This concept of “trickle down” economics was the crux of Reagan’s plan to improve the US economy, and represented the zenith of the self-interest philosophy in America.

More recently, however, the concept of self-interest has been replaced with the word “greed,” and that is not completely unjustified. With unrestricted personal liberty, many ill-intentioned individuals have achieved their own self-interest at the cost of the well-being of others. Complete, unrestricted self-interest has the potential to divide society into a kind of caste system, where the rich continually monopolize the wealth and take advantage of the poor in order to maintain their social status. Thus, in an economic system driven by self-interest, you won’t truly find prosperity; you will just find prosperity for those who have been best able to manipulate the system to their benefit. The obvious and most extreme proponent of this idea is obviously communism. In *The Communist Manifesto,* Karl Marx asserts that an unrestricted economy creates a wealthy class in society: the bourgeois, who are allowed to pursue their self-interest to the point that they can enslave the rest of society, who becomes the class called the proletariat. Communism consequently dictates that self-interest be reined in to prevent such a gross abuse of the economic system.

Communism is the most extreme form of restricting self-interest, however. Every economic system has restricted personal liberty and self-interest; the differences are found in the degree in which self-interest is limited. Everything from patent laws to environmental restrictions to labor laws to taxes limit self-interest. Anti-trust laws are a common example of limiting self-interest for the sake of overall economic security.

Examples abound where excessive self-interest has hurt economic security. Interestingly enough, America can be interpreted as demonstrating the self-interest that led to an economic explosion that actually was harmful economically, specifically during the Industrial Era. Toward the turn of the twentieth century, government regularly sided with business and allowed self-interest to be the economy’s driving factor. Rather than providing equal opportunity, this system divided society into separate economic classes, and made it disproportionately more difficult for those who were born in disadvantaged situations to achieve economic prosperity. Business owners were able to manipulate the poor by setting wages lower than it cost to feed a family. While the rich prospered under this climate of low wages and increasing profits, the poor found themselves in increasingly deplorable and hopeless conditions.

The philosophy of self-interest is not limited to an economic concept, however. Both those who support and those who oppose self-interest as the basis of an economic system often do so under the argument of fairness. Those who support self-interest claim it is the most fair because it engenders responsibility. Individuals are forced to bear the consequences or reap the benefits of their action or inaction. Those who oppose self-interest would assert that greed must be kept in check—accountability is what keeps the system fair. We cannot condone the unbridled self-interest of a few to unfairly manipulate the rest of society. Either system can pull from a plethora of reliable sources or historical examples to show how self-interest either furthers or limits fairness.

Economies driven by self-interest have long championed fairness as a benefit because it requires responsibility. In situations where it is “every man for himself,” all individuals must face the consequences of his or her actions. If economic security is guaranteed regardless of an individual’s actions, individuals will no longer have to bear the burden of poor decision making. A focus on personal freedom and self-interest will thus result in the fairest circumstances possible; regardless if the outcome of an individual’s actions be good or bad, proponents of self-interest would assert that the consequences would be deserved.

Interestingly enough, the oft-used example of slavery illustrates this point perfectly. Prior to being freed, slaves tended to be irresponsible with the equipment that they used, were frivolous with any money they might have, and were incapable of supporting themselves. The knowledge that their absolute necessities—food, clothing, housing—would always be covered resulted in a deficiency in responsibility. When slaves gained their freedom, there was a transition time where they had to learn to bear the consequences of their actions, and at first, the newly-freed African Americans struggled with that. Over time, however, they adapted, and in being responsible for their own well-being, they acclimated to the situation. Giving slaves personal freedom in this situation did undermine their economic security. However, through the responsibility thrust upon them, they were forced to bear the consequences of their actions, and were eventually able to reap the benefits of the work ethic they developed.[[94]](#footnote-94)

Conversely, self-interest does not always give the fairest climate. Although allowing self-interest to drive economics generally means that individuals have to take responsibility for their actions, that will not always be the case. Self-interest inherently means that one person will do what is best for himself, often avoiding the consequences of his actions by pinning them on someone else.

One example we saw recently of self-interest leading to unfairness was the Enron scandal that occurred starting in 2001. Enron executives sought to increase their own economic profit by drastically inflating the value of the stocks. As a result of the variety of dishonest tactics used, naïve and largely innocent investors ended up losing over $60 billion when the ruse was discovered.[[95]](#footnote-95) The principle behind the example is not hard to perceive; by allowing unmonitored self-interest to thrive, individuals who were not responsible for the mess took the fall—in a huge way. When self-interest is not held accountable in society, there will be some who unfairly bear consequences that are not a result of their actions. In such a situation, it is arguable that personal freedom not only undermined the economic security of the individuals involved, but it unjustly hurt the economic well-being of innocent individuals.

With this resolution, self-interest will necessarily come into play, whether or not you are explicitly arguing it. It’s important to regard self-interest as no more than what it is: a means. Self-interest is the foundation of economic activity, whether that is in a good way or a bad way. It will extend much further than just the world of economics, however, and opens up another whole world of possibilities using this year’s resolution. It is inherently connected to the concepts of both personal freedom and economic security, and will be the crux of many arguments under this resolution; proper understanding of both sides of the idea is imperative to succeeding in this year’s competitive season.

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One Economist to Rule Them All

An Introduction to Keynesian Economics

by Jon Bateman

If I told you we should save capitalism by implementing quasi-socialist policies, you would probably think that I was crazy. However, the existence of the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States, the passage of the stimulus bill, and the bailouts of financial industry all illustrate the simple fact that, for better or for worse, our government subscribes to this belief. The origins of this idea can be largely traced back to the ideas of one man, John Maynard Keynes, and the economic system which bears his name: Keynesian economics.

Keynes: A Biography

Keynes was born in 1883 in Cambridge, England. His father was also an economist and sent his son off to Eton (a prestigious boarding school in England) to receive the best education. After Eton, Keynes attended King’s College in Cambridge where he earned a degree in Economics. During World War I he worked for Britain’s treasury department. By the time the great depression hit, Keynes had become a prominent member of British society. He cemented his place in history in 1936 when he published his most famous work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, more commonly referred to as “General Theory.” In General Theory, Keynes laid out the reasons for the Great Depression and what could be done to fix the economies of both the United States and Europe. The principles behind his proposed actions were such a departure from previous economic theories that they were christened a new economic theory and given the name, “Keynesian Economics”. In 1944, toward the end of World War II, he helped to set up the Bretton Woods System of Monetary Management, which later evolved into the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Unfortunately, Keynes died of a heart attack two years later, in 1946.[[96]](#footnote-96)

Keynesian Economics

So what is Keynesian Economics and how does it apply to the resolution? Before Keynes, the doctrine of personal economic freedom reigned supreme in most western economies. In America particularly, free market capitalism was especially prominent. Before the outbreak of the Great Depression, Herbert Hoover even boasted, “With impressive proof on all sides of magnificent progress, no one can rightly deny the fundamental correctness of our economic system.”[[97]](#footnote-97)

But then the great depression hit, and America’s economy tumbled. People wondered how the free market had allowed that to happen, but according to economist Robert Heilbroner, “In retrospect it was inevitable. The stock market had been built on a honeycomb of loans that could bear just so much strain and no more. And more than that, there were shaky timbers and rotten wood in the foundation which propped up the magnificent show of prosperity.”[[98]](#footnote-98) It was into this economic scene that John Maynard Keynes stepped onto the stage.

It was already a widely accepted economic theory at the time that economic prosperity is measured by national income, and that income is in a constant see-saw balancing motion with savings on one end and investment on the other. The simplified idea is that when each worker receives their paycheck the majority of that paycheck goes back into the economy by way of paying for food, rent, clothing etc. This type of spending is referred to in economic terms as investment. However, a certain amount of the money you earn goes into savings (hopefully). When you save your money, you put your money in a bank. The bank then uses that money to give out loans, which have the effect of investing in the economy. Thus, by either spending or saving, you are investing in the economy and the economy will continue to expand.

As enlightening of an economic lesson as that was, what does the savings/investment see-saw have to do with Keynes? Well, the importance of the see-saw theory is its explanation of how free markets balance themselves. The theory goes like this: if people starting spending more and saving less, which is what happens in good economic times, it causes an economic imbalance that would eventually be disastrous. However, the system is restored to equilibrium because the previously invested in companies then set some of that excess investment aside in savings themselves. Conversely, if people start saving more and spending less, which is what happens in poor economic times, it also causes an economic imbalance. Once again, the system corrects itself because the banks use those excess savings to invest more in companies. This theory was described as a see-saw motion— always alternating from high peaks to low troughs and back to high peaks. [[99]](#footnote-99)

Under this theory, situations like the Great Depression shouldn’t happen. The system should correct itself as the see-saw tilts the other way. But the Great Depression did happen, so the theory must be flawed in some way. It was Keynes who identified this flaw. Robert Heilbroner wrote in *The Worldly Philosophers*, “Keynes found the flaw in [the see-saw theory] in the simplest and most obvious (once it had been pointed out) fact of economic life: There would be no flood of savings at the bottom of the trough.” The author goes on to say, “How could a community be expected to save as much when everyone was hard up as when everyone was prosperous? asked Keynes. Quite obviously, it could not.”[[100]](#footnote-100)

Having established that in extreme cases the market would not automatically cure itself, Keynes presented an alternate solution. In an adapted excerpt from Commanding Heights by Daniel A. Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, PBS describes this solution in the following way: “Replace the missing private investment with public investment, financed by deliberate deficits. The government would borrow money to spend on such things as public works; and that deficit spending, in turn, would create jobs and increase purchasing power. Striving to balance the government's budget during a slump would make things worse, not better.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

In short, Keynes advocated direct government intervention in the economy during a severe economic downturn in order bring the economy back to good health. This was nothing short of violating a key tenant of capitalism, the belief that the government should stay largely out of the affairs of the economy. Keynes saw this abridgement of the system as a necessity to ensure the survival of the economy.

Keynesian Economics and Marxism

Since Keynesian Economics call into question the fundamental assumption of capitalism (that the market can regulate itself) and urges for government control and intervention, many have equated Keynesian economics with Marxism and communism. However, Paul Mattick wrote, “Keynesianism may also be regarded as a transitory state towards a completely government-regulated capitalist economy, it has become the theory of social reform within the capitalist system. It stands thus in strictest opposition to Marxism which concerns itself not with social reform but with the abolition of the capitalist system.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Keep in mind with this resolution especially that Keynes was interested in the salvation, not the abolition, of capitalism.

Other Critiques of Keynesian Economics

One critique of Keynesianism is that the conclusions reached by Keynes relied on a belief that economic concepts could be expressed in mathematical formulas. The Daily Capitalist describes it this way: “Keynes’s theory is based on econometrics which employs mathematics to explain its notions. Here is Keynes’s basic theorem: AD=C+I+G. In plain English: Aggregate Demand ([another term for] GDP) = consumption + gross investment + government spending. In other words, according to Keynes, the economy is a mechanistic construct of human behavior that can be manipulated by simply adjusting the formula. If consumption ‘C’ is too low, then the answer is to increase government spending ‘G.’”[[103]](#footnote-103) This critique goes on to state that economies cannot be expressed in simple mathematical terms due to the unpredictability of human nature. Thus Keynes mathematic formula (and the theory based of it) falls short of reality.

Another critique is that Keynesianism ignores the reality of unemployment. In Keynes’s theory of the see-saw of the economy, it is assumed that people with no income cannot make expenditures and consequently are not counted when looking at the total investment the economy is capable of having. Economist Predrag Rajsic explains it this way, “Thus, it seems that [Keynesian Economics] assumes zero consumption for the unemployed, which directly implies that the unemployed will not be able to sustain their physical existence in a prolonged recession.”[[104]](#footnote-104) Reality tells us that the unemployed continue to live, which means that they must consume something, and consumption means that they are contributing to the total investment of the economy. If that doesn’t make sense, think of it this way: Whether kept alive by charity or welfare, the unemployed continue to spend money, a fact that Keynes’s formulas ignore.

In addition, many people hold that Keynesian economics leads to government micromanagement of the economy even in good economic times. However, according to Robert Heilbroner, “Keynes did not see the government program as a permanent interference with the course of business. He saw it as lending a helping hand to a system that had slipped and was struggling to regain its balance.”[[105]](#footnote-105) Regardless of the fact that Keynes himself may have seen the role of government as temporary, the fact remains that decidedly non-temporary government economic programs have been implemented in the name of Keynesian economics.

Application to the Resolution

Now that we have looked at what exactly Keynesian economics is, we can finally look at how it applies to the resolution. The resolution states, “Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.” The key term in the resolution is “when in conflict”. This means that the resolution is not asking whether personal freedom is better than economic security. It is common in Lincoln Douglas debate theory to view the meaning of the phrase “when in conflict” and its impact on the resolution in the following way: should actions that benefit personal freedom but harm economic security be preferred to actions that benefit economic security but harm personal freedom?

Keynesianism is important to this resolution because the core philosophical doctrine of Keynesian economics is that it is acceptable to violate the free market process in order to save the free market system itself from collapse. To put it another way, economic security should be valued above personal freedom. In short, Keynesianism is the very embodiment of the economic philosophy of the negative side of the resolution.

The real beauty of Keynesian economics is that it gives the negative more room to work with under the resolution. While many on Affirmative may try to pin communism on the Negative side as the ultimate expression of economic security over personal freedom, you are not bound to this view of the resolution. Be careful of the outright championing of Keynesian economics in the round, as many judges (especially in a largely conservative, homeschooled league) may be biased against it. However, using some basic ideas of Keynes, the possibilities for negative argumentation expand exponentially. It allows you to state, “Personal freedom is not only valuable but is also highly beneficial. However, when it conflicts with economic security we must side with economic security in order to preserve the survival of economy itself, without which personal freedom is a moot point.”

Conversely, as stated earlier, many judges will be biased against Keynesian economics on name recognition. However, many may not realize that advocating economic security at the expense of personal freedom is a Keynesian idea. It is up to you to make the connection and hammer home the disadvantages (to borrow from some Team Policy terminology) and un-workability of Keynesianism. Fortunately for you, an entire economic theory known as Austrian Economics has spent the last half century decrying the dangers of Keynesian economics.[[106]](#footnote-106) The Austrian economic school of thought, incidentally, is also heavily in favor of personal freedom in the economy. Use the thoughts of men such as Ludwig Von Mises, Milton Freidman and F.A. Hayek to bolter your arguments against a Keynesian (whether stated or implied) negative.

Real World Applications

I want to end by listing some popularly used, real world examples of Keynesian economics and how they can be used by both Affirmative and Negative.

The Great Depression: The great depression was both the economic event that triggered Keynes to write his new economic theory and served as the first test trial of Keynes’ theory. The example can be used by both negative and affirmative:

On Negative: When Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1932, the Depression was stretching into its third year. The nation was in bad shape. Prior to the crash in 1929 to 1932, the unemployment rate had gone from 3.14% to 23.53%.[[107]](#footnote-107) Roosevelt then implemented the New Deal, a massive government spending and investment plan aimed at revitalizing the American economy. This was Keynesian economics through and through. But did the New Deal work? Many contend it did. Eric Rauchway of The American Prospect writes, “The most important thing to know about Roosevelt's economics is that, despite claims to the contrary, the economy recovered during the New Deal. During Roosevelt's first two terms, the U.S. economy grew at average annual growth rates of 9 percent to 10 percent, with the exception of the recession year of 1937-1938. As economist Christina Romer (now director-designate of the Council of Economic Advisers) writes, these rates were ‘spectacular, even for an economy pulling out of a severe recession.’”[[108]](#footnote-108) After the New Deal came World War II. Undeniably, the economy finished its recovery from the Great Depression during WWII and emerged as an economic powerhouse. Still, many people claim that it was the high government spending specifically during WWII that finally ended the Great Depression.[[109]](#footnote-109) The Great Depression can be used effectively as an example of both Keynesian economics and when personal freedom had to be put aside in the name of economic security.

On Affirmative: It is not universally accepted that the New Deal and its Keynesian policies actually ended the Great Depression. In fact, many contend that the New Deal actually inhibited recovery. The Wall Street Journal explained it neatly, “Why wasn't the Depression followed by a vigorous recovery, like every other cycle? It should have been. The economic fundamentals that drive all expansions were very favorable during the New Deal. Productivity grew very rapidly after 1933, the price level was stable, real interest rates were low, and liquidity was plentiful. We have calculated on the basis of just productivity growth that employment and investment should have been back to normal levels by 1936.” The article goes on to ask, “So what stopped a blockbuster recovery from ever starting? The New Deal. Some New Deal policies certainly benefited the economy by establishing a basic social safety net through Social Security and unemployment benefits, and by stabilizing the financial system through deposit insurance and the Securities Exchange Commission. But others violated the most basic economic principles by suppressing competition, and setting prices and wages in many sectors well above their normal levels. All told, these antimarket policies choked off powerful recovery forces that would have plausibly returned the economy back to trend by the mid-1930s.”[[110]](#footnote-110) The Great Depression can just as easily be used as an example of the dangers of valuing economic security over personal freedom.

The Federal Reserve: Perhaps the ultimate expression of Keynesian economics is the Federal Reserve. On their website, the Federal Reserve lays out their mission statement as:

“Conducting the nation's monetarypolicy by influencing the monetary and credit conditions in the economy in pursuit of maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates; Supervising and regulating bankin**g** institutions to ensure the safety and soundness of the nation's banking and financial system and to protect the credit rights of consumers,” and “Maintaining the stability of the **f**inancial system and containing systemic risk that may arise in financial markets.”[[111]](#footnote-111)

It doesn’t get much more Keynesian than that. The entire purpose of the Federal Reserve is to manipulate the free market in order to ensure the stability of the economy. For more detailed information on workings of the Federal Reserve itself, I highly recommend the article on the Federal Reserve in the 2010-11 Goldbook Midseason (this blatant product placement was made because I wrote that article).

On Negative: The Federal Reserve offers the perfect opportunity to stress the need for financial regulation in the name of economic security. A particularly apt example is that of bank reserves. The Federal Reserve regulates how much money banks must hold in reserve. Economist Anna Schwartz explains it this way, “If the required reserve ratio is 10 percent, then starting with new reserves of, say, $1,000, the most a bank can lend is $900, since it must keep $100 as reserves against the deposit it simultaneously sets up.”[[112]](#footnote-112) The Federal Reserve creates these requirements so that if a person defaults on their loans, the bank has money set aside to cover their loss. This restricts the Banks’ freedom to lend as they choose in order to ensure economic security. These reserve requirements also help the Federal Reserve control the amount of money flowing through the economy, helping to prevent excessive inflation or deflation. In short, the Federal Reserve deliberately intervenes in the free market to ensure the overall health of the system— a Keynesian idea if there ever was one.

On Affirmative: As beneficial and necessary to our system as the Federal Reserve may seem, not everyone views them as such. In his book End the Fed, Congressman Ron Paul argues that the Federal Reserve’s adjusting of the economy may seem to help in the short run but causes artificial booms which lead to disastrous busts, thus destabilizing the economy in the long run.[[113]](#footnote-113) The Federal Reserve can be used effectively as an example by the affirmative of the dangers of trusting anyone to act in the name of “economic security.”

The financial collapse of 2008: In late 2008, the United States financial market started to collapse. Banking Leviathans like AIG, CITI Group, and others were on the verge of bankruptcy. The actions taken by the government to save the banks and later to save the rest of the economy were Keynesian to the core. In a true free market, a business that goes bankrupt deserves to fail. However, in the name of economic security, the government bailed out the banks. Similarly, the government followed Keynes’s theories when they passed the Stimulus Bill (officially titled the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; a very Keynesian name).

On Negative: In the nation at large, but particularly in a largely conservative league, many judges may be biased against the bank bailouts. In fact, according to the Washington Post, “In his first State of the Union address, President Barack Obama [said] the bank bailout was unpopular but necessary to stop the meltdown of the nation's financial system.”[[114]](#footnote-114) Stress the necessity of the choice in order to prevent the collapse of the entire system. Also, stress that the need for the bailouts was caused by choices in which the banks exercised their freedom to lend money at the expense of the security of the economy. With regards to the Stimulus Bill— while its overall effectiveness is hotly contested, CBS reports, “In many ways, the Cash for Clunkers program, which offered rebates of up to $4,500 to consumers for upgrading to new, more fuel-efficient cars, exemplifies the debate over the effectiveness of stimulus spending. The program disbursed $2.9 billion in rebates, spurring the purchase of close to 700,000 new cars and giving a much-needed boost to the faltering auto industry. Critics accurately point out that many of those purchases would have been made anyway in the future, without taxpayer subsidies. But one of the primary goals of stimulus spending is to get people spending money *now,*while the economy is hurting, and Cash for Clunkers certainly did that.”[[115]](#footnote-115) The fact, that United States is recovering well and most experts have declared that the recession is over, lends heavy support to the government’s Keynesian actions and illustrates the need for economic security over personal freedom quite well.

On Affirmative: Unsurprisingly, many contend that the Bank bailouts actually made things worse. John Tamny, the editor of Forbes Opinion wrote, “The bank bailouts of 2008 continue to bring the broad economy harm, all the while restraining the ability of the banking system to get back on its feet.”[[116]](#footnote-116) Judges are also more likely to believe that government intervention was largely ineffective, particularly the Stimulus Bill. The Wall Street Journal reported, “The stimulus didn’t work. The data show government transfers and rebates have not increased consumption at all.” The authors state, “Administration economists cited Keynesian models that predicted that the $787 billion stimulus package would increase GDP by enough to create 3.6 million jobs. Our own research showed that more modern macroeconomic models predicted only one-sixth of that GDP impact.”[[117]](#footnote-117) These two examples can be used to poignantly illustrate the failures of government attempts to ensure economic security.

Conclusion

Whether you agree with Keynes’s theories or not, it cannot be denied that the thoughts of John Maynard Keynes have heavily influenced American economic policies for the past century. In addition, a Keynesian thought process opens up huge swaths of new ground for the negative in this resolution. In light of these facts, expect Keynesian economics to be a recurring topic in debate rounds this year. Armed with knowledge about Keynes, his theory, and practical applications, you can effectively debate this topic on both affirmative and negative.

Entrepreneurship

The Ideology for Success

by Cynthia Jeub

Risk: besides being one my brothers’ favorite games, it’s also something that people worry about when it comes to money. What are the chances of losing money if I invest? What are the chances of losing my money if I put it in the bank? What are the chances of loss if I start a business?

Starting a business means going out on a limb, and putting all your eggs in one basket. It’s risky. The only group of people more likely to go bankrupt than entrepreneurs is gamblers. The difference between an entrepreneur and a gambler is simply that the entrepreneur relies on his own hard work and skill to gain success, while the gambler relies on chance.

I’m convinced that anyone can be an entrepreneur, but successful entrepreneurs are unique. They know how economics work and act on that knowledge. Even if the people behind entrepreneurial success stories don’t know the exact terminology of marketing, they are familiar with the flow of the market they are in—that’s why they are in that market. It interests them and they want to contribute to it. Entrepreneurs are driven by profit, and are often strong leaders and inventors. They care deeply about their products, and sometimes it’s tough to get an entrepreneur to talk about something unrelated to his work. A business owner pays careful attention to his ROI (Return on Investment), because, unlike an employee whose attitude may be to spend the company’s money freely, he is putting his very livelihood at risk whenever he spends money out of the pocket of the business.

Consumers are essential to the Entrepreneur. Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, said, “There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.[[118]](#footnote-118)” Or as Thomas Edison put it, “I never perfected an invention that I did not think about in terms of the service it might give others...I find out what the world needs, then I proceed to invent.[[119]](#footnote-119)” These quotations are among those that today’s business owners know by heart. It runs through their heads when on the phone with dissatisfied customers, and it is in the back of their minds whenever considering a new product. Because of this “customer conscience,” entrepreneurs will only sell a product if they believe it is the best possible item their customers can get.

Entrepreneurship is good. It keeps markets on a competitive edge by innovating and competing. When debating, never say that it’s okay to hurt entrepreneurs. That’s not only a bad idea because of the judging pool in homeschool debate, but because entrepreneurs represent freedom, equal opportunity, and the pursuit of happiness. We love stories of successful entrepreneurs because they give us hope in our own endeavors.

Let’s see how entrepreneurship will look in debate rounds under this year’s resolution.

Personal Freedom

I’ll just say it: Starting a business is an exercise of personal freedom. The reason behind such an endeavor varies among entrepreneurs. And sometimes, businesses fail. When investing your time and money on a new idea, you can’t guarantee that your company will stay afloat. In other words, “economic security” isn’t the first thing that most people think of when they consider starting a business.

That said, here are some ways to argue the affirmative side of the resolution: Entrepreneurship is an exercise of free will (personal freedom) that risks economic security. Personal freedom is necessary for entrepreneurship, and, on the flipside, personal freedom is good because it allows for entrepreneurship.

When a topic declares that something “ought” to be valued, this leaves the question of what the results are to valuing something. This use of the word “value” can be compared to belief: I can’t be sure I believe something because I say I believe it. That belief has to be put into practice and tested. In the same way, to see if valuing something is a good idea, it has to be compared to real-life situations. This seems obvious because it sounds simple before being applied to a topic and a debate round. Personal freedom can be valued with two actions: *preserving* personal freedom (something the government does) and *exercising* personal freedom (what the individual does). The resolution specifies neither of these, so you as the affirmative can choose to define the round with one or the other.

Freedom is something that is preserved, not granted, by the government. Freedom is something everyone has until some kind of restraint comes along, and the government ought to make sure that nobody’s freedom is restrained (unless a citizen vanquishes his right to his own freedom by infringing on someone else’s rights, but that’s another issue). The reason I bring up the government here is because entrepreneurship looks at the resolution from a personal view. I expect several cases this year to offer government values such as capitalism and justice. Entrepreneurship is different in the sense that it’s not something that the government ought to value, it’s something that individuals ought to value.

The affirmative side of the resolution has the upper hand for entrepreneurship. This is because freedom allows for making bad decisions. Entrepreneurs go bankrupt more often than unionized employees. Vote for risky courage over weak clinging to security.

Economic Security

“Play it safe” is a term tacked on the negative side of this resolution by affirmative cases. One fun thing about LD is that you can choose whether or not to accept the terms thrown on you by the affirmative.

Before getting into some useful arguments as the negative, let me give you some tactics to develop your stance: first, while your opponent is giving the AC, flow every *assumption* they bring up. Identify assumptions by asking, “Did my opponent provide reason to believe that’s true?” Your ears should prick at an accusation against your side of the resolution. Listen carefully to the qualifier your opponent gives. Chances are good that you’ll hear a sentence that you can argue against in the paragraph following the contention’s tagline.

Second, set up the argument in Cross-Examination. The way you do this is to first ask the question that confirms your opponent’s stance: “Did you say that economic security is never good if it excludes freedom?” (He’ll answer yes.) Then ask a follow-up question that completes the logical syllogism: “Does the resolution say ‘to the exclusion of,’ or does it say, ‘when in conflict’?” If your opponent answers “when in conflict”, all you have to say in your next speech is that both of you agree on the fact that his argument is non-resolutional.

With this resolution, there are a few key undesirable terms that sound like they would stick with the negative side. “Valuing economic security doesn’t allow for risk-taking. They’re playing it safe.” Now as the negative, you have two options: agree or disagree? In this instance I’d agree with the affirmative and say, “Judge, my opponent says that my side of the resolution advocates playing it safe. That’s true, and I’ll add that personal freedom doesn’t just ‘play it unsafe,’ it also plays unwisely. To exercise personal freedom to the point that it is no longer limited by economic security is to take your freedom beyond common sense. Yes, you *can* squander your future financial stability on gambling, but you *should not* do so. Economic security keeps freedom in check, preventing it from becoming financially suicidal.”

An example of disagreeing with the affirmative’s terminology is when the definitions assume that the *government* preserves freedom. This directs the round toward whether individual people should have freedom, and it puts the negative in a tight spot: in terms of what government should do, it’s hard to argue that economic security ought to be more highly valued than personal freedom. That’s arguing the right to social security and pension plans over the right to liberty. You have very little chance of winning on these terms. So don’t accept them. Just point out that this is an interpretation of the resolution that limits the debate and ignores the core issue: individual discernment. Shouldn’t people in general be deciding whether to exercise freedom or to choose the safe haven of stability? The topic doesn’t insinuate that a government must value one to the exclusion of the other. This should be effective against cases on capitalism or justice.

Applications

Entrepreneurship can be run as an illustration by itself, but it may not gain as much resonance from your audience as, say, the name Thomas Edison. So here are some ways to run entrepreneurship as an application.

First, microloans. “Microcredit” or “microloan” are terms used to describe money lent to someone who has no other options. For instance, in a (often third-world) country with a poor economy and poor job market, a person with talent may be able to start her own business. But you need money to start a business. In this poor economy, our talented person is unable to get a job long enough to save up for her entrepreneurial endeavor. The solution is to have ministries send small amounts of money to these soon-to-be business owners. This alleviates poverty more effectively than, say, food, because it helps the poor to move up in the world instead of simply sustaining their present state. And it balances economic security and personal freedom, because it provides both. Microloans: alleviating poverty one entrepreneur at a time.

Thomas Edison. Inventor of the light bulb. ‘Nuff said? Not quite. Among Edison’s other accomplishments were the phonograph and the fluoroscope, not to mention electricity distribution. Edison cared deeply for his customers, saying “I shall make electricity so cheap that only the rich can afford to burn candles.[[120]](#footnote-120)” That goal is realized today because he didn’t stop at inventing a useful light. He made it usable by pursuing a way to get the electricity needed to operate it to the common household. Dedication. Made possible only in a country that values personal freedom.

At this point I might as well bring up Henry Ford. Maker of the automobile, friend of Thomas Edison, and mastermind behind the “assembly line.” Ford realized the importance of collaboration, and it benefited his business greatly. To value personal freedom too highly, too much individualism if you will, demands a reliance on self that prevents such cooperation. By working together, a car could be made quickly and more could be sold. Collaborative success. Ensured by valuing economic security.

Speaking of Ford, Henry would be proud of the actions taken by his namesake company over the past few years. When the White House approached the “Big Three” auto industry businesses in late 2008 to find out if they wanted a bailout, only General Motors and Chrysler accepted. The third company, Ford, turned down the opportunity to take taxpayer funds, betting that they could ride out the economic downturn on their own steam. In February of 2009, the auto industry hit a 27-year low, and many wondered if Ford could make it. Today, Ford’s comeback has been stronger than the other companies in the automobile market, because they chose freedom from debt and governmental involvement over economic security.

The founder of Wal-mart, Sam Walton, valued his customers. He was willing to lose money for the sake of his image *because it was good business in the long run*. Economic security must sometimes be bought at the price of limited freedom. But Walton proved that it’s worth it, because a satisfied customer is a kept customer who recommends the service to others.

No matter what side of this topic you find yourself on this year, it can’t hurt to know a bit about entrepreneurship. If economics interest you, read some books about these people. Find out what made the greats great. More often than not, the success stories of our time started with a small business idea.

Section 2: Cases

Jumpstarting the Season with Key Concepts Transformed into Solid, Usable Cases

Debating LD in This Year’s Resolution

Affirmative

“It is always easier to

believe than to deny.

Our minds are naturally

affirmative.”

—John Burroughs

**We Can Be Heroes**

*A Value-Criterion Affirmative Case*

by Travis Herche

**Responsibility and Justice**

*A Value-Criterion Affirmative Case*

by Elizabeth Ertle

**Seek Your Fortune**

*A Value-Criterion Affirmative Case*

by Travis Herche

**I Say Freedom, You Say Progress**

*A Value-Centric Affirmative Case*

by Ashlyn Olson

**I Want YOU! to be Successful**

*A Means-Criterion Affirmative Case*

by Jesse Byrnes

**When Security Policies Backfire**

*A Means-Criterion Affirmative Case*

by Benjamin Griffith

**In and of Itself**

*A Unified Analysis Affirmative Case*

by Matthew Mittelberg

We Can Be Heroes

A Value-Criterion Affirmative Case

by Travis Herche

Glen Alleport once wrote that: “Without freedom, love withers and dies.[[121]](#footnote-121)” And in life, nothing is more important than love. Thus, I am Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

Let me begin with two operational Definitions.

Personal Freedom: The condition of having a high level of personal choice in one’s life.

Economic Security: The condition of having a stable monetary situation and living standard.

Now let’s move to the

Value: Noble Life

Noble Life is operationally defined as: “Life worth living.” I will hold that the conflict of personal freedom and economic security can be best measured according to this standard. Thus, at the end of the round you will be asked to choose: which better makes a life worth living? Freedom or money?

The reason you should use Noble Life as the value for this resolution are the two Value Links.

Value Link 1: Life Goals

Humans have a number of universal needs and wants. We all want to be liked and admired. We want to be comfortable and safe. We want to feel needed. How we seek to achieve these goals varies. Some seek to earn it though economic security, and some seek to live it through personal freedom. The conflict in the resolution is about how to best achieve life goals and live a noble life. Thus, my value is perfectly suited to the debate.

Value Link 2: Universal

We’ll be looking at many different issues and ideas in this debate. I’m sure my opponent has a few ideas to present as well. The value of Noble Life is all-encompassing, providing a way to evaluate every idea and contention in an appropriate context. This means you can make the best possible decision on the resolution without leaving anything out.

Criterion: Love

A noble life - one worth living - is full of love. Wordsmyth defines love as “a sacrificial commitment.”[[122]](#footnote-122) Love is about choosing someone before yourself and overriding selfish impulses in favor of nobler ones.

Criterion Link: Fill the Emptiness

A life without love is empty and pointless. A life with love is noble and worthy. While no one’s life is exactly the same, all those who enjoy Noble Life are actively practicing and experiencing Love. Thus, Noble Life can be achieved and measured through Love.

It is my position that Personal Freedom ought to be valued over Economic Security because it enables Love, thus creating a Noble Life. I will prove this in two Contentions.

Contention One: Economic Security restrains Love

At its core, Economic Security is about stuff: money, and the things money can buy. Money must be earned. That requires measures like employment, commitments, agreements, and contracts. Money must be saved rather than given away. All of these reduce personal freedom by limiting choice.

When your life goal is to secure your economic well-being, your ability to actively love others will be reduced because you will be motivated by selfishness. As an **Application**, consider the life of **Hetty Green**. She holds the Guinness World Record title for “World’s Greatest Miser.”[[123]](#footnote-123) Her ruthless business tactics earned her the nickname “Witch of Wallstreet,” and though she died with a fortune amounting to what would now be billions of dollars, she wouldn’t lower herself to spare a penny to help others. When her aunt’s will gave two million dollars to charity, the Witch of Wallstreet forged papers to try to transfer the money to herself!

Hetty Green is a sad picture of a life motivated by Economic Security. It was devoid of love. Even her relationships with her own children were broken. Hetty forfeited a golden opportunity for a noble life in favor of loneliness, bitterness, and wealth.

Contention Two: Personal Freedom enables Love

When you choose to move away from the pursuit of money and embrace Personal Freedom, the chance to sacrifice yourself for others in love opens before you. You are no longer beholden to material gain. Now you can walk your own path - and a noble life of love and sacrifice becomes enabled.

Consider the **Application** of **Mother Teresa**. She devoted fifty years of her life to the service of the poor, sick, and orphaned, forgoing her own economic security. Starting in India, her Missionaries of Charity spread a liberating message of hope to every corner of the globe. She had the freedom to pour love into those around her, which is why President Reagan honored her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1985. Today, Missionaries of Charity operates more than 600 missions in 120 countries.

Mother Teresa never amassed a personal fortune, but she touched hundreds of thousands of lives in a positive way. She lived a noble life, thus proving that Personal Freedom enables love.

Not all wealthy people are selfish. But those who pursue Economic Security when it conflicts with Personal Freedom are forfeiting their chance at a Noble Life. It is only in sacrificial selflessness that we can each have lives worth living. And that can be done whether our economic security is assured or if we don’t have a penny to our names. Economic Security is a hindrance at best. Personal Freedom is the road to love. Thus, I encourage you to join me in support of the resolution.

Rebuttal: We Can Be Heroes

by Travis Herche

This case interprets the resolution in an individualistic way, whereas your case probably interprets it as referring to an entire economic system. You need to acknowledge that or your cases won’t seem to clash. If your case doesn’t refute the aff logic at all, you’ll need to argue topicality. Say that the resolution is about economic systems, not individual people.

The applications can be persuasively dangerous, so present a counter to Hetty Green. Point to a great philanthropist like John Rockefeller who gave away half his fortune. His money enabled his love!

Your job will be much easier if you can replace the value. Pull out both guns with value links and reasons to prefer your own. If Noble Life/Love is in danger, the aff will be on the defensive the whole round.

Question the link between freedom and love. Argue that freedom enables everything, even extreme evil; it was Teresa’s charitable nature that made her loving. Consider an application of some evil person who used his freedom to hurt others. There are literally billions of examples.

The resolution definitions are fairly balanced. Unless they clearly place your case in jeopardy, accept them. If you must argue them, try to discredit them because they are operational (meaning they were written for the sake of the debate).

Your standard reaction to the aff arguments should be: “not necessarily.” Aff jumps to a lot of conclusions and ignores the nuance. Show the judge the nuance and the case will stumble.

Responsibility and Justice

A Value-Criterion Affirmative Case

by Elizabeth Ertle

Socrates once said, “Nothing is to be preferred before justice.”[[124]](#footnote-124) It is because agree with Socrates that justice is the most important aspect of any society, that I stand Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security. To clarify exactly what that means, I offer the following definitions:

Definitions

Individual freedom—the ability to dispose of one’s own life, liberty, and justly acquired property however one sees fit, so long as one does not coercively infringe on another individual’s ability to do the same.[[125]](#footnote-125)

Valued—Highly regarded or esteemed.[[126]](#footnote-126)

Economic security—the degree to which individuals are protected against hardship-causing economic losses.[[127]](#footnote-127)

Value

My value in today’s debate round is that of justice, which is defined as “The rendering to every one his due or right; merited reward or punishment.”[[128]](#footnote-128) Both economic security and personal freedom are only good insofar as they achieve a fair result. Justice is fundamental to any society that espouses either. Thus, when we are choosing between personal freedom and economic security, our preference should be whichever provides us with a more just result. I will show you in this case how personal freedom best upholds justice, and therefore should be valued above economic security when the two conflict.

Criterion

My criterion, or the way we will achieve justice, is responsibility. Responsible is defined as “Answerable or accountable, as for something within one's power, control, or management.”[[129]](#footnote-129) The amount of justice you have in a society directly corresponds with how much responsibility individuals hold. The more responsibility you have, the more you will either bear the penalties or reap the rewards of your actions.

Contention 1: Justice Determines Choice

Personal freedom and economic security are both valuable things, but only insofar as they are based on and further justice. More important than everyone being economically stable is that everyone gets what they deserve. Martin Luther King Jr. once wisely asserted, “[L]aw and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose they become dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.”[[130]](#footnote-130) Justice is both the foundation and the end of society; without it, both personal freedom and economic security are worthless. Our resolution has given us these two concepts and asks which we should prefer when the two conflict. Justice resolves this conflict. When personal freedom and economic security are exclusive, whichever one better upholds justice should be more highly valued.

Contention 2: Personal Freedom Promotes Responsibility

The more liberty people have, the more responsibility they have to bear. Maximum liberty requires that individuals will feel the results of their actions more directly. For example, take the transition time during which African-Americans were freed from slavery. At first, the former slaves were unable to support themselves; because they had never had possessions of their own, they did not know how to properly manage their resources. Regardless of how they had used resources while in slavery, their basic necessities would be cared for: they would always be fed, clothed, and sheltered. While they might be punished for their frivolity, they did not feel directly the consequences of their actions. Similarly, even if they took initiative and worked tirelessly, their master would be the one to benefit. When they were freed, they found themselves faced with a quandary: now if they used resources wastefully, it would directly negatively impact themselves. However, as they learned to handle their personal freedom, their responsibility grew. By experiencing the consequences of their actions—and reaping the rewards as well—the newly freed African-Americans were able to learn responsibility through exercising their personal freedom. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility. For the person who is unwilling to grow up, the person who does not want to carry his own weight, this is a frightening prospect.”[[131]](#footnote-131) The presence of freedom necessitates responsibility.

Contention 3: Responsibility Upholds Justice

Almost by definition, responsibility will produce justice. It requires that individuals bear the consequences of their decisions. The focus of any justice system is to force the criminal to take responsibility for his actions. By holding individuals accountable for their decisions, it metes out punishment that is deserved in relation to the crime committed. Conversely, if individuals are responsible for their own actions, they are able to benefit by justly gaining the rewards of their choices. We saw this through the emancipation of the slaves—when they gained freedom and responsibility, they were able to justly gain the rewards of their hard work, rather than the results going to their masters. Through this increase of freedom and responsibility justice was achieved.

In conclusion, personal freedom and economic security can both be valuable things, but neither has the intrinsic worth of justice. In a society, it is essential that an individual be held accountable for his wrongs and be able to gain what is rightfully his. When we uphold personal freedom, individuals are forced to take responsibility for their actions—whether they be good or bad. This is the very manifestation of justice. Personal freedom is thus the way we can achieve a society whose foundation and end is justice. It is for this reason that I strongly urge an affirmative ballot at the end of today’s debate round.

Rebuttal: Responsibility and Justice

by Elizabeth Ertle

The easiest way to defeat this case is by demonstrating how personal freedom actually allows people to shirk responsibility and thus avoid the consequences of their actions. It is a simple enough matter to assert that personal freedom does not force people to take responsibility—rather, it allows them to act without consequences because they can pass along the consequences of their actions to someone else.

Value/Criterion

As with any case that values justice, the question that the affirmative must face is “what is justice?” or in more specifically, “what is everyone’s due or right?” A probable response that the affirmative can give is that the implementation of justice doesn’t have to be determined; through personal freedom everyone will automatically feel the consequences of his actions. Because everyone is responsible for themselves, no one determines what justice is; it will appear of its own accord. But while this is a nice idea, the real world doesn’t work so perfectly. Why do we have a court system if justice will just come about as a result of personal freedom? Someone has to enforce justice in certain situations; who gets to do that?

Contention 1

How you respond to this depends on your negative case, but it is completely legitimate to simply accept the value of justice and argue that personal freedom cannot lead to justice. If you do this, most of the arguments will center around the other two contentions. If you present a competing definition, a solid way to attack justice is the utopian nature of justice. Sure, justice is a great thing, but can we ever really attain it? No. It’s wiser to be pragmatic and strive for a value that can actually be achieved.

Contention 2

This is the weakest link of the entire case, because it assumes that people will always actually take responsibility for themselves. In actuality, personal freedom will allow individuals to avoid responsibility by pinning the consequences of their actions on others. More generally, some people will automatically be harmed by the actions of others—unfairly being penalized for actions they did not take. For example, children have been held accountable for debt their parents accrued after their parents’ deaths. The more specific example of Bernie Madoff’s elaborate Ponzi scheme shows just how personal freedom provides people with the opportunity to escape responsibility. Rather, sometimes it is necessary to violate personal freedom to ensure that people are responsible for their actions.

Contention 3

Personal freedom does not always cause people to be responsible for their actions, and thus it cannot always ensure that a just result will occur. The major thing to point out is that certain actions have externalities—results that the perpetrator will not feel, but those surrounding them cannot escape. The simplest example of this is pollution. If a corporation were to emit toxic chemicals into a river that provided a city’s drinking water, obviously they are at fault for the consequences. However, regardless of whether or not the corporation is held accountable, the people may be irreversibly harmed—obviously unjustly. In certain situations, being responsible for your actions does not necessarily mean that justice will be served to everyone.

Seek Your Fortune

A Value-Criterion Affirmative Case

by Travis Herche

The SBD Dauntless dive bomber was truly a masterpiece of engineering. With long range engines and heavy armament capable of taking on several fighters at once, it proved a mainstay of American air forces for many years of World War II. In the battle of Midway, Dauntlesses sank three Japanese aircraft carriers in just six minutes. When the smoke cleared, the Dauntless has sunk more hostile shipping than any other plane in the Pacific.

But of course, the makers of the Dauntless didn’t learn to make planes so they could sink ships. They did it because they had a job to do. They did it because they saw that aviation was the future, and they earned a small fortune in the process of serving their country. We can be grateful that they were willing to take those risks. It is because of their example that I am Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

Let me begin with two operational **Definitions**.

Personal Freedom: Opportunity for transience on a personal level.

Economic Security: Opportunity for stability on an economic level.

With that understanding, let’s move forward to the

Value: Wealth

Wordsmyth English Dictionary defines Wealth as: “a large quantity of money or property or the state of having such; affluence.”[[132]](#footnote-132) Wealth is the external standard by which the resolution can be measured.

The reason you should use Wealth as the value for this resolution is the

Value Link: Point of Contention

The resolution suggests two ways to build wealth: through high-risk, high-payoff enterprises (personal freedom) or through careful investment (economic security). As the judge, you are being asked to decide which approach best builds personal wealth. Thus, this value gets right to the heart of the debate, at its point of contention. This makes it the perfect value for the round.

Criterion: Return on Investment (ROI)

According to the Encarta World English Dictionary, Return on Investment is: “profit from an investment as a percentage of the amount invested.”[[133]](#footnote-133) ROI is a way to measure wealth building, and it applies to every financial endeavor, from a mega-corporation to a minimum-wage laborer.

When Wal-Mart decides to overhaul its internal design, it does so because of the belief that the cost of moving their inventory will be offset by increased sales. When a ten year old agrees to mow his vacationing neighbor’s lawn for ten dollars, he does so because he thinks the investment of time and labor is worth the pay.

Higher paying jobs are generally more desirable because they offer a higher ROI for the time invested in them. When saving money, people look for accounts with high interest rates because those offer the best ROI. And, most important to this debate, investments with an element of risk offer the highest possible payouts and the best ROI.

Criterion Link: Financial Success

Simply put, higher ROIs mean more money. You can’t build wealth without a good ROI. Thus, Return on Investment provides a means and measure for the value.

It is my position that Personal Freedom ought to be valued over Economic Security because that is the most effective way to build Wealth. I will prove this in three contentions.

Contention One: Economic Security offers low ROI

Having amassed a reasonable amount of money, many people just want to find a stable safe place to keep it. They’re not concerned about ROI; they just want to keep their money safe for retirement. They want economic security.

That’s assured by savings accounts, which offer the maximum security possible for everyone involved. The money will always be there, and if you leave it in the account long enough it will grow very slightly over time. Of course, this is no way to achieve wealth. You can’t put a dollar in the bank and expect anything but for that dollar to be safe. This is the tradeoff of economic security - low risk, low Return on Investment.

Contention Two: Personal Freedom offers high ROI

Huge returns are the key to building wealth. When there’s a possibility your venture won’t go as planned, the potential return shoots way up. That means the only honest way to build significant wealth is through risk: breaking away from economic security and turning the future into a question. It’s by taking advantage of your freedom as a worker and an investor. Financial Writer Art Gib summed up the contrast in the resolution beautifully: “Low risk usually equals low return ... High risk investments are for the gutsy investor wanting to see a huge return.”[[134]](#footnote-134)

Contention Three: Personal Freedom is the Road to Wealth

History is full of examples of accumulated wealth. Barring immoral behavior, they all involve the use of personal freedom to take risks and venture into high-ROI territories. Nowhere is this more evident than in the **Application** of **Venture Capital**. Venture capital is investment into high-risk startup companies that have a good business idea and growth potential but need capital investment to get started. Venture capitalists invest in these businesses to get them off the ground, and are rewarded with large or even controlling shares in the company when it grows. This is a risky proposition because there is no guarantee the business will succeed. But when it does, the payoff is enormous.

In the early 1900s, a time when powered flight was still a radical new concept, one man came up with an idea for a company that manufactured innovative new airplanes. The Douglas Aircraft Company was financed through venture capital investment from the Rockefeller company.[[135]](#footnote-135) The company grew steadily in design and revenue. In World War II, the company picked up contracts for tens of thousands of American war planes, including the iconic Dauntless dive bomber and the B-17 Flying Fortress. The company continued to innovate in aerospace design until a lucrative merger in the 1960s created McDonnell Douglas, which later became part of Boeing.

The choice to invest in an airplane company took a lot of personal risk. It meant walking away from economic security and embracing personal freedom. But the payoff was well worth it for those early investors, because they understood that wealth is achieved through freedom. In this round, we would do well to learn from the lessons of history and finance, and that’s why I ask you to side with me in favor of the resolution.

Aff Notes

The B-17 was a collaboration between several companies, so don’t be intimidated if someone tells you it was a Boeing plane.

Rebuttal: Seek Your Fortune

by Travis Herche

This case rests very neatly on a highly vulnerable value link. Your goal should be to take that out and reframe the entire debate so it’s not a question of if wealth is built. Argue that your negative case (which doesn’t deal with Wealth) is proof that the link is incorrect; the point of contention lies elsewhere. In all likelihood, this will be a definition debate as well. Be ready to fight and win.

The case logic itself has openings for attack, but this is not as strong an approach as taking out the value link and refocusing the entire debate on your negative case. If you’d like to go this route, find an application in which a venture capitalist lost everything in a risky gamble. Then talk about how wealth must be preserved, not just earned, through economic security. Finally, talk about ways that economically secure people can be wealthy, like heirs to financial empires. Point also to people who work hard to get jobs that are sure to be lucrative, like positions in law and medicine (in America). They get wealth and stability without taking serious risk.

Killing both the value and the case logic is redundant and probably takes too much time. You want your case to be the primary focus. So decide which approach to take and drop the other completely. Again, I recommend prosecuting the value.

I Say Freedom, You Say Progress

A Value-Centric Affirmative Case

by Ashlyn Olson

“And what is this liberty, whose very name makes the heart beat faster and shakes the world? Is it not the union of all liberties — liberty of conscience, of education, of association, of the press, of travel, of labor, of trade? In short, is not liberty the freedom of every person to make full use of his faculties, so long as he does not harm other persons while doing so?” [[136]](#footnote-136)

Because I agree with Frederick Bastiat in his book *The Law* that personal freedom is fundamental, I stand Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

For the purpose of clarification in this debate round, I provide the following definitions.

**Conflict** will be defined by Collins English Dictionary as, “a state of opposition between ideas, interests, etc; disagreement or controversy.” [[137]](#footnote-137)

**Personal Freedom** will be defined by Nelson Education as, “The absence of coercion in various aspects of life.” [[138]](#footnote-138)

Dictionary.com defines **Valued** as, “to regard or esteem highly.” [[139]](#footnote-139)

Finally, **Economic Security** can be defined by combining the defintions of “economic” and “security” from dictionary.com as, “Safety in regards to the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities.” [[140]](#footnote-140) [[141]](#footnote-141)

The **value** I will be upholding today is **Progress**. Progress is defined by dictionary.com as, “A movement toward a goal or to a further or higher stage.”

In order to help us see why progress is the highest value, and to discover the best means of achieve progress, let’s look at the following contentions.

C1—Progress is the highest value

Progress is what drives people, communities, and nations towards higher goals. Progress is what has brought about the greatest innovations in society. Progress has changed oppressive nations, and improved even the smallest of communities. In this year’s resolution, values provide the spectrum in which we compare personal freedom and economic security. By upholding progress as my value, I will show you how personal freedom will better help us achieve progress. [[142]](#footnote-142)

C2— Personal Freedom is paramount

Personal freedom should be held as paramount when economic security and personal freedom come into conflict.

Sub-Point A) Personal Freedom is important

Personal Freedom allows society to thrive. Due to the nature of the terms personal freedom and economic security, the clash or conflict will lie in the debate between the rights of the individual versus the common good. Personal freedom prevents the collective mindset which can so often lead to socialism, and instead promotes individualism. As Immanuel Kant explained, “Freedom is independence of the compulsory will of another, and in so far as it tends to exist with the freedom of all according to a universal law, it is the one sole original inborn right belonging to every man in virtue of his humanity.”[[143]](#footnote-143) Personal freedom holds the government accountable, and prevents the government from interfering too much into the individual’s life.

Sub- Point B) Personal Freedom leads to Progress

Personal freedom leads to progress in society in ways ranging from advocating natural rights to benefiting a country economically. When freedom is allowed to flourish, other natural rights are given the opportunity to thrive. As John Rawls explained in his book A Theory of Justice, “Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.” [[144]](#footnote-144) In addition to aiding natural rights, personal freedom in a capitalist system guarantees competition and the freedom of choice for both the producers and the consumers.

Overall, personal freedom is paramount and leads to progress, demonstrating that when the two conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

C3—Economic Security should not be valued highest

When in conflict, economic security should not be valued above personal freedom.

Sub-Point A) Economic Security is problematic

Valuing Economic Security above personal freedom can create problems. A nation like China is considered economically secure, yet the Chinese government offers its citizens very little personal freedom. According to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China Annual Report for 2002, “The Chinese Constitution guarantees freedom of worship, assembly, speech, and other fundamental liberties, but provisions elsewhere in the Constitution undermine such freedoms.” [[145]](#footnote-145) China is willing to infringe on personal freedom in order to maintain economic security.

When the government is allowed to sacrifice personal freedom, the government’s power increases, and the question arises: How much is the government allowed to infringe on our personal freedom in the name of economic security? According to John Locke, “The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom.” [[146]](#footnote-146)

Sub-Point B) Economic Security can harm Progress

By preventing personal freedom from thriving, economic security can actually harm progress. We can see an example of this in Robert Owens’ society, New Harmony.[[147]](#footnote-147) Owens attempted to create a utopian society where everyone would cooperate and work together in a well-regulated community. Sounds nice, right? Wrong. In his attempts to provide economic security through a socialistic method, Robert Owens limited the personal freedom of New Harmony’s inhabitants, which eventually led to the collapse of the society. Striving after economic security by limiting personal freedom can harm progress.

In conclusion, progress is ultimately the highest value we are striving for in today’s debate round. Because personal freedom achieves progress, and economic security can harm progress, I continue to stand resolved that when in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

Rebuttal: I Say Freedom, You Say Progress

by Ashlyn Olson

Attacking the Thesis:

The thesis of this affirmative case is that personal freedom leads to progress. If you can break that link and convince the judge that personal freedom does not lead to progress, you should be able to effectively win the debate round.

Attacking the Value:

There are two primary ways to attack the value of progress, but they cannot be used together. Depending on what negative case you are running, you will be able to determine which strategy will work best for you.

Arguing Progress

The first strategy is attacking progress in and of itself. How do we know when we are striving after progress? Who decides when progress has been achieved? What are we progressing toward exactly? These inherent questions provide two arguments for the negative: 1) Progress is vague. Unless the aff is able to give you concrete signals for how we know when we are achieving progress, we don’t know exactly what we are striving after. Therefore, progress can be vague. 2) Progress is subjective. Depending on who you talk to, people will have different ideas of what progress is. Therefore, progress is subjective.

Pursuing Progress

The second strategy is adopting the value of progress, and using your case and rebuttals to prove how economic security leads to progress better than personal freedom does. When a country is economically secure, the country has more room to progress. However, when a country is in economic turmoil, progress can be hard to achieve.

Main Arguments:

1) Too much Freedom

Where are the limits to freedom? Is the government ever allowed to limit rights? Even John Locke recognized that in the state of nature, man has an absolute, lawless freedom that needs to be limited to some extent.

2) Capitalism does not guarantee Progress

The United States promotes personal freedom and capitalism. However, the United States has now accumulated an over $14 trillion debt.[[148]](#footnote-148) Was it worth it? Or, should the US have valued economic security higher?

3) Economic Security does not crush freedom

Valuing economic security higher than Personal freedom does not mean that our society will end up like Robert Owens' New Harmony. Personal freedom and economic security can co-exist. But, economic security needs to be valued higher in order to guarantee progress.

I Want YOU! to be Successful

A Means-Criterion Affirmative Case

by Jesse Byrnes

*Author's Note: The value of success within this case is intentionally vague. A fantastic value, though vague. This is done to afford you, the debater, the greatest flexibility when it comes to arguing the resolution. Do you want to value the success of an individual in a society or the success of the society and economy as a whole? Can you value the latter and still maintain an affirmative stance given the nature of the resolution? Some negatives may choose to take this case and run it by valuing success through the lens of economic security (possibly even using it as a criterion). Either way is permissible. The former is represented here.*

INTRO

"Yet is there a greater tragedy imaginable than that, in our endeavour consciously to shape our future in accordance with high ideals, we should in fact unwittingly produce the very opposite of what we have been striving for? [...] Hence arises the clash between planning and democracy."[[149]](#footnote-149) So said economist Friedrich Hayek in his book *The Road to Serfdom*. When societies try to shape, plan, and force a certain type of future –– as opposed to valuing democracy and freedom –– tragedy ensues. Economic security is not necessarily a bad thing, but when it conflicts with personal freedom, personal freedom ought to be valued higher. It is because of this that I stand Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

When they conflict, personal freedom should be valued higher. But what is conflict? **Conflict**, according to *Merriam-Webster*, is “competitive or opposing action of incompatibles**:** antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons).”[[150]](#footnote-150) Thus, within the context of the resolution, when personal freedom and economic security become incompatible –– that is, begin to be competitive and at opposition –– it is personal freedom that ought to be valued higher.

VALUE

To justify my position in today's round, I will be advocating the value of **Success**, defined per *Oxford University Press* as “the accomplishment of an aim or purpose.”[[151]](#footnote-151)

Now, you have probably heard the saying, “What defines success?” People can be successful at anything if they set a goal and find their purpose in life, and then accomplish those things. After thirty-five years in the subject, in his book *Success 101*, John C. Maxwell defines success as “knowing your purpose in life, growing to reach your maximum potential, and sowing seeds that benefit others.”[[152]](#footnote-152) Purpose, potential, benefiting others. That is success. But how does one *become* successful? What are the means to achieving success? As Maxwell puts it, “the picture of success isn't the same for any two people because we're all created differently as unique individuals.”

CRITERION

Because of this, I propose **Personal Freedom** as the *criterion* or means of achieving success. According to Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, **personal** is “relating to an individual; affecting individuals; peculiar or proper to him or her, or to private actions or character.”[[153]](#footnote-153) Webster defines **freedom** as “a state of exemption from the power or control of another; liberty; exemption from slavery, servitude or confinement,” noting that freedom can be “personal, civil, political, and religious.”[[154]](#footnote-154)

But how does personal freedom relate to economic security? What *is* economic security? Most economists will contend that economic security relates to one's standard of living (including job security, income, etc.) in the present and foreseeable future, or the standard of living of individuals in a society. Simply put, the security of one's economy or the security of an economy as whole. Economic security and the complications therein can hinder one's ability to succeed or even attempt to succeed.

Personal freedom is the exemption from the confines of economic security. When personal freedom is valued, one's ability to succeed is unleashed. We will see this through the following contentions.

CONTENTIONS

1. Success is paramount

Throughout the ages, each generation quickly realizes that success is paramount. The opposite of success is failure. No great person has ever been great because they were a failure, or even mediocre. History rewards those that succeed in whatever they do. Not that some were not born into humble beginnings or unfortunate circumstances, but that they are recognized because they overcame their situations and became successful.

But people can be successful at the wrong things in life. Take Bernie Madoff. Before the cat got out of the bag, many considered him to be successful. But at what? Scamming people? Was not Charles Darwin successful at popularizing the idea of natural selection and evolution? Oftentimes success is judged based on the culture and society within which it occurs. Christopher Columbus was awesome enough to discover the New World, but was also a proponent of slavery, something common in his day. In the twenty-first century, because of our developed views concerning slavery, Columbus has gone from hero to zero overnight. Regardless, right and wrong do not change, and success, viewed though the lens of personal freedom, is paramount. As J. Hawes put it, “Aim at the sun, and you may not reach it; but your arrow will fly far higher than if aimed at an object on a level with yourself.”

2. Personal freedom promotes success

If there is one thing that history has shown to be true it is that personal freedom promotes success. When individuals are at liberty to strive toward what they know they can contribute to society, and do so by utilizing their individual, God-given gifts and talents, they can be a success. Not one person has been a success that has ever *not* done something, and likewise, not a single person has ever succeeded at something without first having the freedom and ability to even try to do that thing, or anything, for that matter. Imagine if the Wright brothers were born into serfdom, Barack Obama in the 1800's, or Ronald Reagan in the Soviet Union. People cannot thrive if their hands are tied. Personal freedom promotes success.

3. Economic security hinders success

Because of the external restraints and control over freedom by an acting governmental body in an economy, we can clearly see that valuing economic security over personal freedom hinders success. Now, I am a proponent of being financially stable. You are unable to fill up your gas tank or pay off that mortgage if you are not financially secure. However, if you had to choose between being financially secure and being free, which would have? Imagine this: someone gives you the choice between the indefinite ownership of a beautiful, fully-furnished home (but having to stay under house arrest for the rest of your life) or being a free person but without any home, car, or possessions (a “nobody”). Unless you are currently homeless and focused on the immediate, you would probably choose freedom. Why? Because nothing is stopping you from using your freedom to make something out of your life and, potentially, getting an even *better* home, *better* car, and *better* possessions. In *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (2010), the economically sly Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) notes, “the one thing I learned in jail is that money is not the prime asset in life. Time is.”[[155]](#footnote-155) People can do a lot with time. They can do a lot with personal freedom. If you choose the home and house arrest, yay, you have a nice house and high standard of living. But are you successful, or did you just settle for the most convenient option? What about marriage, traveling, becoming a leader, and being a thriving citizen? You may be economically secure, but at the expense of freedom. Unless your only goal in life is to own a house and a few possessions, choosing house arrest and economic security would hinder your ability to be successful.

CONCLUSION

Just like economist Friedrich Hayek addressed in his book, at the end of the day you have a choice: do you want the tragedy of planning, restrictions and controls that is economic security, or do you want the liberty, democratic values, and successfulness that is personal freedom? As Winston Churchill put it, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts." Be courageous. Vote for personal freedom and success. Stand with me in affirming the resolution: [that] when in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

Affirmative Extension: I Want YOU! to be Successful

by Jesse Byrnes

1. Success is paramount

What is the negative value in the round? Do they advocate that the judge vote for it? Probably. Why vote for it? Because, they would contend, it is valuable and valuing it brings something good. But what if you are unable to successfully value it? Some mischievous LDers may claim fiat or something tricky like that. Success is paramount because it can subsume all values under its professing of working toward the good in life. Success can find the best in any value.

2. Personal freedom promotes success

Take nations. Has a single "successful" nation ever existed that did not protect personal freedom? The entire role of constructing a nation and forming a government is to protect our unalienable rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," as Jefferson put it, and that "to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men." As Noah Webster quotes J. Hawes in his dictionary, "Character and success depend more on personal effort than on any external advantages." When you value personal freedom, you promote success.

3. Economic security hinders success

House arrest analogy: Pitting personal freedom against economic security, it seeks to paint economic security as a safe, albeit underachieving, bet. As described, a reason to advocate for freedom is that nothing is keeping you from using your freedom to obtain a house, car and possessions, and that there are no limits to one's potential, though economic security does limit one’s potential by making sure a certain criteria is met.

The example of testy freedom versus comfy house arrest is not just an analogy or a false dilemma. People have to make the choice all the time. Bernie Madoff chose economic security (via trickery), and is now in jail for life. Many communist countries such as China, Cuba, and North Korea pursue economic security, but at the expense of freedom. China's growing economy is due to the growing amount of freedom and capitalism in its market, not the communistic planning behind closed doors. Some people are neither financially secure nor free, such as is still the case in many parts of the world today, including many parts of Africa, rural China and even in growing parts of the U.S. In America, bailouts and higher taxes have been used to try and secure our economy, but have resulted in the Great Recession and a loss of personal freedom. When they conflict, pursuing economic security over personal freedom harms success.

Rebuttal: I Want YOU! to be Successful

by Jesse Byrnes

You may have heard the wildly popular phrase "Success is a journey, not a destination." As you argue against this case, be sure to realize how "success" functions as a value. Is it the means or "journey" to a higher goal, or is it the highest object to be valued? The affirmative obviously believes it to be paramount, but if success is really a journey and not a destination, might your value be worth pursuing instead? As Churchill put it, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts."

Another angle to attack is the vagueness of success as it relates to the resolution. Is the affirmative dealing with the success of the individual or the success of the society/economy as a whole? Can they value the success of *both* given the context of the resolution?

As mentioned at the beginning of the case, this outline could be used for both the affirmative and negative. A smart negative running against this case could use "success" as *their* value, economic security as a criterion, and modify the respective contentions (2 and 3). If this were the case (pun intended), the debate would center around "when in conflict, which means achieves success better: personal freedom or economic security?"

SAMPLE CX QUESTIONS / NEGATIVE APPLICATIONS

Value: Success // C1: Success is paramount

1. Do you believe that success is a journey and not a destination?

2. What aim or purpose should be valued highest?

3. Are you valuing the success of the individual or success of the society?

C2: Personal freedom promotes success // C3: Economic security harms success

1. Does personal freedom always lead to/promote success?

e.g., (One could argue that it does, because whatever anyone ever does could be considered a success if they intended for that specific outcome.)

2. Would you agree that there are instances where personal freedom led to failure?

e.g., caught bank robbers, murderers, Tiger Woods and sponsors, etc.

3. Would you agree that there are instances where personal freedom has led to economic insecurity?

e.g., December 2007 financial collapse (could more restraint on personal freedom have limited the impact?)

4. Would you agree that personal freedom is limited when economic security is undervalued?

e.g., the "Great Recession" (how much personal freedom is available given the state of our economy?)

5. Does your definition of economic security include "house arrest"? (Lighten up.)

When Security Policies Backfire

A Means-Criterion Affirmative Case

by Benjamin Griffith

Have you ever been playing a group game at a party only to be interrupted by that one guest who thinks it would be “wise to add a few more rules” to supposedly make the game “easier and less confusing?” What usually happens? In most cases, the game goes downhill after that extra rule is added. Instead of sitting back and enjoying the game as it goes, people are suddenly caught up with this new requirement. Everyone walks away unsatisfied and the host is usually so bitter that he refuses to give any of his friends their little bag of party favors.

Okay, maybe the consequences aren’t THAT devastating, but in the world of economics, a “new rule” implemented for the purpose of “security” will often lead to some sort of unwanted effect. It is because economic security policies tend to destabilize the economy that I stand firmly resolved: when in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

Definitions

For purposes of clarity, I offer the following definitions:

**Conflict – “**A state of opposition between ideas, interests, etc; disagreement or controversy” (Collins English Dictionary – Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition)[[156]](#footnote-156)

**Value –** “to consider with respect to importance” (Random House Dictionary Unabridged)[[157]](#footnote-157)

**Personal Freedom – “**Individual exemption from external control, interference, [or] regulation” (Combined definition from Random House Dictionary Unabridged)[[158]](#footnote-158)

**Economic Security – “**Freedom from danger and risk in the management of the resources of a community or country” (Combined definition from Random House Dictionary Unabridged)[[159]](#footnote-159)

Value & Criterion

The value I will be championing in today’s round is that of Economic Stability, defined by Random House Dictionary[[160]](#footnote-160) as a “continuance without change [in] an economy.” The goal of today’s resolution is to ultimately reach a state of stability in the economy. The reason that anyone would ever pursue the ideas presented in today’s round is because they value consistency in the management of resources.

The best way to ensure a stable economy is through high emphasis on the criterion of **Personal Freedom.** While the initial thought may be to regulate the economy in order to ensure consistency, the truth is that the economy best thrives when all individuals are able to manage their own assets without restraint.

As the following three contentions will show, the best way to maintain economic stability in a community is through high emphasis on personal freedom.

Contentions

Contention 1: Higher Emphasis on Economic Security Destabilizes the Economy

In our pursuit for economic stability, we have the tendency to consider economic security to be more important than the personal freedom of the members in a community. In actuality, economic security policies almost always “backfire” and end up destabilizing the economy.

Let’s look at job security laws. Job security laws are instituted for the sake of supposedly preventing the risk of unemployment in the economy. Job security laws infringe on the personal freedom of business owners in the economy by creating obstacles that make it difficult to lay off employees, even if they are being counterproductive. *The Economist* said that in countries with heavy job security regulations, “Firing is such a costly headache that many prefer not to hire in the first place.”[[161]](#footnote-161) The fact that these laws are enforced with the *intention* of securing the economy is different from the real consequences of such laws: in reality, job security laws tend to only increase unemployment rates.

For example, the country of France has implemented heavy regulations for job security. But even with these laws, it is typical for France to have a double-digit unemployment rate.[[162]](#footnote-162) The South African government also places heavy emphasis on job protection and has consequentially enjoyed an unemployment rate consistently above 25%, topping 30% in 2002.[[163]](#footnote-163)

When the government places too much emphasis on economic security and disregards personal freedom, it usually disrupts the stability of the economy.

Contention 2: Higher Emphasis on Personal Freedom Ensures Economic Stability

When a government allows every individual to manage his own assets without restraint, the economy thrives and is unlikely to dive into recession.

Economic analyst Thomas Sowell notes that in the United States, job security regulations are much lower in comparison to countries such as France and South Africa.[[164]](#footnote-164) Interestingly enough, US unemployment rates are significantly lower as well. In 2006, the *New York Times* reported American concern about the lack of “full employment” even with an unemployment rate below 6 percent.[[165]](#footnote-165) The United States is currently recovering from a heavy economic recession which had American economists utterly overwhelmed by a 10.6% unemployment rate in June of 2010.[[166]](#footnote-166)

When personal freedom is emphasized over economic security, business owners enjoy much more control over their own company and are able to freely hire (or dispose of) any employees that apply for work. This frees up the economy and allows it to grow without unnecessary restraint, ultimately leading to a more stable economy.

Contention 3: Personal Freedom ought to be Valued Above Economic Security

Today we’ve analyzed the resolution by looking at two different ideas and the consequences of valuing each. When personal freedom and economic security conflict, personal freedom must be valued highest. Regulations in the name of economic security have a tendency to backfire and do more harm than good, leaving the economy with less stability than before. However, when every individual is able to manage his own property for himself, all members of the community are free to contribute to the growth of the economy without the hindrance of any unnecessary obstacle. The labor market will flow smoothly and consistently and the community will achieve a state of economic stability.

For all these reasons I urge you to stand with me in affirming the resolution: when in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

Rebuttal: When Security Policies Backfire

by Benjamin Griffith

Value & Criterion: Economic Stability & Personal Freedom

Economic Stability is quite similar to Economic Security. There is more of a link between economic stability and a risk-free economy than there is between economic security and the freedom of an individual. If we choose to value economic security, our economy will most likely be consistent in its protection from risk.

Stability is only a state of consistency. Something could be consistently good or consistently bad. Bring your value into the picture and show that it is superior because it is *always* good.

The criterion of personal freedom should be attacked through your whole rebuttal. Show that valuing personal freedom is just too risky sometimes and can lead to a damaged economy.

Contention 1: Higher Emphasis on Economic Security Destabilizes the Economy

True regard for economic security implies that the economy will be secure. If a policy is implemented in the name of economic security, but fails to stabilize the economy, there is no true esteem for economic security.

Just because some countries with job security laws have high unemployment rates doesn’t mean that job security laws are always bad. The Employment Security Commission of North Caroline (ESC) is a commission headed by North Carolina governor Beverly Perdue. Here’s their mission: “The mission of the Employment Security Commission is to promote and sustain the economic well being of North Carolinians in the world marketplace by providing high quality and accessible workforce-related services. The Commission provides employment services, unemployment insurance, and labor market information to the State’s workers, employers, and the public. These services promote economic stability and growth, development of a skilled workforce, and a world class economy for North Carolina.”[[167]](#footnote-167) The state government of North Carolina is committed to economic security. The commission released an article in April of 2011 indicating an overall decrease in unemployment rates in 99 of the 100 counties of North Carolina.[[168]](#footnote-168)

Contention 2: Higher Emphasis on Personal Freedom Ensures Economic Stability

The fact that United States job security laws do not match up to the regulations enforced by the French and South African governments does not necessarily prove that personal freedom is more important than economic security. The United States still has job security laws. For example, in order to prevent corruption and provide general economic security, we have established minimum wage standards. The United States still places a high emphasis on economic security.

Contention 3: Personal Freedom ought to be Valued Above Economic Security

Contention 3 is just a summary of all the thoughts in this case. If you can break down the argumentation made with the analysis on the values and first two contentions, the third contention will fall as well.

In and of Itself

A Unified Analysis Affirmative Case

by Matthew Mittelberg

“No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man.”[[169]](#footnote-169)

I agree with Ghandi in today’s debate round – personal freedom absolutely should not be denied, and that is why I stand Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.

To clarify this debate round, I offer the following definitions:

Conflict is defined as: “incompatibility or interference, as of one idea, desire, event, or activity with another”[[170]](#footnote-170)

Personal freedom is defined as: “The absence of coercion in various aspects of life.”[[171]](#footnote-171)

Economic security is defined as: “financial assurance, economic strength”[[172]](#footnote-172)

In today’s debate round I’m going to be advocating a unified analysis case, instead of a regular case. In a regular case, I would encourage you to vote affirmative because personal freedom and my side of the resolution uphold one particular value which, I would argue, is better than my opponent’s value. However today I’m running a unified analysis case, which means I’m arguing that personal freedom in and of itself is superior to economic security in an overall sense. This means that you should be voting affirmative not because my case upholds some arbitrary value, but because my side of the resolution, personal freedom, is superior to the opposing side of it, economic security. I will be analyzing three reasons for this in my following contentions – any one of which by itself proves that personal freedom should be valued above economic security:

Contention 1 - Prioritizing personal freedom protects people from governmental robbery

Problem - Eminent Domain

According to the California Eminent Domain Handbook, "'Eminent domain' - also called 'condemnation' - is the power of local, state or federal government agencies to take private property for 'public use' so long as the government pays 'just compensation.' [But] The government can exercise its power of eminent domain even if the owner does not wish to sell his or her property.” They go on to say: “It should be noted, however, that the term 'public use' has been interpreted very broadly by the Courts.” And they say that: “Recent cases have even allowed the use of eminent domain for the sole purpose of increasing tax revenues."[[173]](#footnote-173)

So right now the government has the power to force you out of your home against your will through eminent domain, just to build a Walmart in its place for the sole purpose of boosting the local economy. This is completely unjust, because even if the people getting kicked out get fair compensation for their property, families will have to gather up all their belongings, leave behind their beloved home, search for a another house, move in, and try to make it feel like a home. Imagine if the government did this to you!

Solution - Prioritize personal freedom

If the government would just prioritize people’s personal freedom to live on their own property, we wouldn’t have this problem! Yes, cities might have a little bit lower economic security because of slightly lower property taxes, but that doesn’t even begin to compare to how important it is to let people keep their own property. Paraphrasing what the renowned philosopher John Locke once said, you don’t truly own anything if the government can take it from you against your will. To fix this, the government must value personal freedom, which is a reason to vote for the affirmative side.

Contention 2 - Prioritizing personal freedom protects individuals from governmental control

Problem - The nanny state mindset

When the Government decides to enact policies to protect economic security against the personal freedom of its citizens, it’s propagating a Nanny State mindset. This is defined in Macmillan Dictionary as “[a](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=a) [government](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=government) [that](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=that) [tries](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=tries) [to](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=to) [protect](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=protect) [its](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=its) [people](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=people) [and](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=and) [control](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=control) [their](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=their) [lives](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=lives) [in](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=in) [a](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=a) [way](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=way) [that](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=that) [stops](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=stops) [them](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=them) [being](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=being) [independent](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/search/american/direct/?q=independent)”[[174]](#footnote-174) This is bad because under this philosophy the government has decided that it knows what’s best for you, and in it’s effort to make the world better, the government enacts nuisance laws that undermine our liberty, punish everyone equally – and ultimately make our world worse. A few examples of policies like this are: universal health care that was enacted to protect the economic security of less wealthy citizens, attempts by the government to regulate what children eat, or in Washington state where it’s literally illegal to wash your car in your driveway.[[175]](#footnote-175)

Solution - Prioritize personal freedom

If the government would just stay out of our lives and trust us to make our own decisions our lives would be much better. We wouldn’t have universal health care – a law that takes away your personal freedom to choose whether to have insurance or not and increases your taxes, taking away your hard-earned money. Personal freedom protects against a nanny state/big government mindset, and allows citizens to live freely, which is a reason to vote for the affirmative side.

Contention 3 - Prioritizing personal freedom protects individuals from slavery

Problem - Slavery

An argument used by slave traders in the colonial United States was that plantations needed slave workers for their businesses, and that the economy would be hurt if slavery were to stop. The government continued slavery, in part, because they believed it was essential to the economic security of the nation. This allowed millions of innocent people to be treated like animals, resulting in a death toll of approximately 10 million people![[176]](#footnote-176) Furthermore, it’s an argument that allows the slave trade to continue today in a different form: human trafficking. India alone has over 100 million people caught up in human trafficking, with over 1 million child prostitutes.[[177]](#footnote-177) All told, this is one of most morally reprehensible collection of crimes ever committed. As Abraham Lincoln once declared, “If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.”[[178]](#footnote-178)

Solution - Prioritize personal freedom

If personal freedom were to be valued above the economic security of the slave traders, the people would be free! There would be no slavery, and there would be no human trafficking. Even if it would hurt the economic security of the nation, personal freedom absolutely should be valued and upheld. Clearly this is a reason to prefer personal freedom, and a reason to vote for the affirmative team.

Because prioritizing personal freedom over economic security will 1. Protect individuals from governmental robbery, 2. Decrease the ability of the government to unjustly control your life, and 3. Protect people from the horrors of every form of slavery, I strongly urge an affirmative ballot.

Extension: In and of Itself

An added additional addendum!

by Matthew Mittelberg

Here is some backup evidence you can use when running my case. Please read through this to familiarize yourself so you are comfortable in reading it or referring to it in a debate round.

Eminent Domain

According to CBS News:

“Just about everyone knows that under a process called eminent domain, the government can (and does) seize private property for public use - to build a road, a school or a courthouse.

“But did you know the government can also seize your land for private use if they can prove that doing it will serve what's called ‘the public good’?

“Cities across the country have been using eminent domain to force people off their land, so private developers can build more expensive homes and offices that will pay more in property taxes than the buildings they're replacing.”[[179]](#footnote-179)

Personal freedom = Property

Constitutional expert Mark Levin wrote, “In the civil society, private property and liberty are inseparable. The individual’s right to live freely and safely and pursue happiness includes the right to acquire and possess property, which represents the fruits of his own intellectual and/or physical labor. As the individual’s time on earth is finite, so, too, is his labor. The illegitimate denial or diminution of his private property enslaves him to another and denies him his liberty.”[[180]](#footnote-180)

John Locke stated in regards to property,

“Men therefore in Society [have] Property, they have such a right to the goods, which by the Law of the Community are theirs, that [nobody] [has] a right to take…any part of it from them, without their own consent; without this, they have no Property at all. For I have truly no Property in that, which another can by right take from me, when he pleases, against my consent…."

The Nanny State harms us all

The political thinker Glenn Beck wrote that:

“A great deal of the plague of the Nanny State stems from the desire of various individuals to make the world a better place for everyone—the proverbial ‘greater good’ argument that progressives so often recite.”

He goes on to ask the question: “But how [should we do this]? In the Nanny State, the answer is ‘By law, or course!’ Using legislation to ‘solve’ an issue at the expense of some of your personal liberty.” And he states that: “Now the government, assisted by a wide assortment of legislation-happy enablers, has decided that it knows what’s best for you. And that’s the problem: In their effort to make the world better, Nannies enact nuisance laws that undermine our liberty, punish everyone equally—and make our world worse.”[[181]](#footnote-181)

Slavery was motivated in part by economic security

The BBC described the arguments that were used to justify slavery, including this one:

“A number of past industries have depended on slave labour, and the employers claimed that abolishing slavery would be economically disastrous.”[[182]](#footnote-182)

Additionally, Teaching American History states that:

“Slave labor, countered the pro-slavery groups, was the crux of the American economy, and without it, the economy was likely doomed to failure.” They go on to state that: “The pro-slavery economic argument focused on the criticism of free labor. Free labor, slavery advocates argued, resulted in high costs, costs farmers would not be able to afford. A notable proponent of slavery from an economic standpoint was Edmund Ruffin, a farmer from Virginia. In his work entitled ‘Slavery and Free Labor Described and Compared’, Ruffin concedes the long-term benefits of free labor, yet insists that the immediate shock would be too much for farmers to bear. Thus, the transition from slave to free labor would not be worth the initial impact it would cast on the economy.”[[183]](#footnote-183)

10 million died as a result of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade

Respected historian Professor William Rubinstein estimated that approximately 10 million slaves were killed over the four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, and he stated that "...of these 10 million estimated dead blacks, possibly 6 million were killed by other blacks in African tribal wars and raiding parties aimed at securing slaves for transport to America."[[184]](#footnote-184)

Rebuttal: In and of Itself

by Matthew Mittelberg

These arguments are to jumpstart your thinking against the In and of Itself unified analysis case. Be sure to add some arguments of your own, but this is a good place to start.

At Unified Analysis:

You’ll need to have a strong value to overcome this. Pick a case with an important and admired value such as justice – one that you believe the affirmative team won’t be able to achieve with personal freedom. You’ll then need to show that your value is more desirable than all of the three contentions, thus demonstrating that economic security is more important that personal freedom.

At Contention 1:

Eminent domain is sometimes necessary – Even though it can occasionally be uncomfortable, eminent domain is sometimes absolutely necessary for the economic security of its citizens for a variety of reasons. One example is when a highway needs to be built in an area where there was none. This change can help the citizens of the community in many different ways – including economically. In those situations, eminent domain should be used for the good of everyone, and that’s a reason to vote for the negative.

**At Contention 2:**

Some regulation is necessary – Although we don’t want the government to unnecessarily control our lives, some regulation is necessary. A few examples of legislation such as this are seatbelt laws, smoking laws, or drunk driving laws. These are all important rulings that, yes, restrict personal freedom, but also save millions of lives. Another example that our nation learned the hard way was its need for more restrictions in the home financing industry. Part of the reason we fell into a deep recession was because there wasn’t enough regulation on what types of loans the banks could give out, so they provided too many risky loans. Then, when citizens couldn’t pay them back, the housing market collapsed – followed quickly by the rest of the economy. There needs to be a balance between restriction and freedom, and instead of letting personal freedom run amuck, the government needs to value the economic security of it’s citizens, and place stricter regulations on the types of loans that can be offered.

Healthcare not a good example – The government is forcing American citizens to pay for healthcare through increased taxes, which actually hurts the economic security of our nation, so this is not really an example of the government choosing economic security over personal freedom. For this reason you can ignore this example in today’s debate round.

At Contention 3:

Slavery didn’t truly lead to economic security

Teaching American History states that:

“[In contrast to slave labor,] Free labor, argued anti-slavery groups, would be more economically sound in that it would encourage competition and foreign investment, as well as acting as a lure for immigrants.” They go on to state “The anti-slavery economic debate largely centered around the notion that slavery was actually a detriment to the economy of Southern states. In this way, slavery discouraged competition and did not allow for free and open trade with northern, anti- slavery states and businesses. Hinton Rowan Helper, a southern writer disparaged the institution of slavery in the south in his book entitled "The Impending Crisis of the South." In the book, Helper argues that the South need abolish the practice of slavery in order to further the economy of the southern states.”[[185]](#footnote-185)

So I’m actually turning this argument in my favor, and saying that if true economic security were to be valued above the personal freedom of the slave traders, there would be no slavery! This is another reason to vote for economic security and for the negative.

Negative

“Hear the other side.”

—Saint Augustine

“The grass may be greener

on the other side of the fence,

but you still have to mow it.”

**You Try Starving! The Case for a Social Minimum**

*A Value-Criterion Negative Case*

by Shane Baumgardner

**The Root of All Good?**

*A Value-Centric Negative Case*

by Patrick Ortiz

**Capitalism on Trial**

*A Value-Centric Negative Case*

by Chase Harrington

**Salute the General… Welfare**

*A Value-Centric Negative Case*

by Jon Bateman

**With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility**

*A Balanced Negative Case*

by Cynthia Jeub

**No Conflict**

*A Kritik*

by Travis Herche

You Try Starving! The Case for a Social Minimum

A Value-Criterion Negative Case

by Shane Baumgardner

A child is starving. You have it within you power to feed that child. In fact you have it within you power to not only feed that child, but also to give him a decent life. You can, with one wave of your hand, give him a chance in this world or condemn him to an early and miserable death. What would you do? We’re asked a more complex form of the same question when we examine the resolution today, which is why I negate this resolution and instead believe that, when in conflict, economic security should be valued above personal freedom.

Freedom: exemption from external control, interference, regulation, etc.[[186]](#footnote-186)

Security: an assurance; guarantee.[[187]](#footnote-187)

**Value:** The value that the Negative will be upholding today is the principle of the Golden Rule, defined as: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This is an almost universally accepted moral principle and the Negative believes that it should be the thing that we consider highest when determining the basic value propositions of a society.

**Criterion:** The Negative believes that we will best uphold the moral principle of the Golden Rule when we pursue a Social Minimum, which is the Negative criterion for this round. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy explains that a Social Minimum is the idea that everyone within a society should have enough to live a decent life.[[188]](#footnote-188) The concept is really very simple; in a civilized society there is no need for people to starve in the streets. We will explore this concept further in the contentions.

Contention 1: The Golden Rule and Economic Security

So often, it is difficult to look at our economic situation through the lens of moral principles. Sure, we carry some of our morals with us to the bank, but they are few and far between. Don’t cheat, have a strong work ethic, but what else? Do we carry the Golden Rule with us? Rarely. So what would it look like to apply the Golden Rule to social inequality? Our knee jerk reaction is to say that that’s impossible, that it would lead to communism and the redistribution of wealth. But is that really the case? Put yourself in the position of an unemployed worker with no money, a family to feed, and no hope of a job. What do you want others to do for you? Do you want them to give you millions of dollars? Do you want them to give you everything they have? I’d hazard a guess the answer to those questions is no. What you want is enough to live off of. You want enough money so that your children don’t starve and you have a chance to get back on your feet. You want a guarantee of the necessities of life. You want assurance that you can live a decent and dignified life. That’s what the Golden Rule looks like when applied to economic security: nothing more and nothing less than a decent life for everyone in society.

Contention 2: Freedom’s Conflict

Unrestricted personal freedom has a serious problem with the concept of a Social Minimum. Total, unrestricted freedom from external control or interference means that you, and only you, can decide what to do with your money. This comes into direct conflict with the concept of a secure, guaranteed social minimum. Simply put, there is no way to grant a universal social minimum to an entire society outside of a compulsorily tax. If you are giving a guarantee, you have to have a way to guarantee you will actually have the money and that only comes with compulsion. And so here we have the basic conflict in the resolution, should we ensure that people don’t starve in the streets? Or should we stand idly by and instead give total freedom to the members of our society? That’s the basic question we are being asked today.

Contention 3: Security’s Promise

Economic security, on the other hand, believes absolutely in a social minimum. The concept is dependent upon the guarantee of some basic economic state. There’s any number of reasons to prefer a system that gives this sort of guarantee, but none is greater than the fact that the Golden Rule points us to this course of action.

Conclusion

Total freedom may sound fair, it may sound feasible, and it may even sound preferable at first, but I challenge you to try starving and tell me that total freedom is preferable to economic security. I challenge you even further to look that starving child in the eye and tell him that there will be no help for him, or the thousands like him, because we think it is more fair that way.

Rebuttal: You Try Starving! The Case for a Social Minimum

by Shane Baumgardner

Value

General Welfare is a great personal standard but not necessarily a great standard for government. Government’s number one duty is to its people, not others. Therefore government must be inherently selfish in order to fulfill its duty.

Criterion

1. A social minimum is incredibly difficult to define. How much is enough to live a comfortable and humane life? Does that change from society to society? It’s very difficult to define this concept and so we can end up with a blank check entitlement that causes major problems.

2. This isn’t the government’s job. Private charity can take this on as its mission but a government should not be involved in guaranteeing that you will always have money. This leads to an overreaching and overly large government.

Contention 1

1. Here you can cross apply your arguments under both the value and the criterion. Is this really government’s job?

2. You can make the argument that many people would not want to be given welfare if they fell on hard times. They honestly believe that there shouldn’t be any assistance rendered to the poor from government and would hold to that even if they were poor. That means that the Golden Rule doesn’t always mandate a social minimum.

Contention 2

Freedom does not reject the idea of compulsory taxes. It does, however, reject the idea that you should take someone’s money away so that you can assure that others have money. There is a difference between taxes for legitimate government programs and taxes that are essentially forced charity.

Contention 3

Cross-apply your argumentation about why a Social Minimum isn’t very good to begin with and why the Golden rule doesn’t mandate such a policy. At that point their reasoning for why security is better is pretty much null and void.

The Root of All Good?

A Value-Centric Negative Case

by Patrick Ortiz

“So you think that money is the root of all evil? ... Have you ever asked what is the root of money?” - Ayn Rand. (Rand, Ayn. For the New Intellectual; the Philosophy of Ayn Rand.)

Today I stand in agreement with philosopher Ayn Rand, that money is not the root of evil, but rather caused by good. It is because of this idea that I stand Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought not to be valued above economic security.

Definitions (if needed)

Personal: Of, pertaining to, or coming as from a particular person; individual; private. (Random House Dictionary)

Freedom: The power to determine action without restraint. (Random House Dictionary)

Economic Security: Economic security is the maintenance of those conditions necessary to encourage sustained long-term relative improvements in labour and capital productivity and thus a high and rising standard of living for a nation's citizens, including the maintenance of a fair, secure and dynamic business environment conducive to innovation, domestic and foreign investment and sustainable economic growth. This is a broad goal sought by all governments. (Canadian Security Intelligence Service)

The resolution asks us to evaluate economic security and personal freedom, but there has to be some sort of context to evaluate them with. For this purpose, I present the value of morality. Because morality is an important value in any context, it is a good judge of which of these ideas should be preferred when they conflict. German philosopher Immanuel Kant defines morality as relying on the principles of absolute standards and respect for humanity. These make for a core foundation of a moral system. So what does money have to do with this? Is it the root of all evil? Let’s examine this concept in

Contention 1: Morality and Economic Security are Codependent

What could money have to do with morals? A lot, actually. It is no small coincidence that the country of Liechtenstein, listed by the CIA World factbook as “Likely the highest per capita income in the world” (CIA - The World Factbook.) has an extremely low crime rate. In 2007, one officer reported that the last homicide was ‘about 10 years ago’. Why is economic security related with morality? This can be seen in a number of ways.

Crime Rates

For the simplest answer, look at statistics. There are a number of examples of wealthy places like Liechtenstein that maintain a high standard of living and low crime rate, and many examples of poverty and crime stricken regions. The Heritage Foundation points to this as a vicious cycle, stating “Businesses are driven from crime-ridden neighborhoods, taking jobs and opportunities with them. Potential investors and would-be employers are scared away. Existing owners are deterred from making improvements on their property, and as property values go down, owners disinvest in their property.” ("Crime, Poverty and the Family | The Heritage Foundation.")

Family Disintegration

The link between economics and morality can also be seen in the breakdown of the family. When a society loses its morality, the family falls apart. When something like abortion causes a society to have a smaller incoming generation, that smaller generation must support the older generation in taxes. This is known as the ‘dependency ratio’. CIA senior government official Herb Meyer describes this, writing, “When birth rates are so low, it creates a tremendous tax burden on the young. Under those circumstances, keeping mom and dad alive is not an attractive option. That’s why euthanasia is becoming so popular in most European countries.” (Meyer, Herbert. "“What in the World Is Going On?”) This creates another vicious cycle: without economic security, people don’t want to have children, having smaller families. The next generation is even smaller, and has the same problem.

Contention 2: Personal Freedom Violates Morality

While freedom sounds like a good concept, it is only as good as the person who is free. An immoral person will use freedom to do immoral things. Morality, in fact, is the regulation of freedom, as Thomas Aquinas puts it, stating, “[Perfection of moral virtue does not wholly take away the passions, but regulates them.](http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/29323.html)” (Quotationspage.com) Even in a generally free nation like America, we realize you can’t be free to do just anything- we have laws that respect humanity and make things like murder illegal. But what is the freest society? Well, one without laws at all. Let’s examine this in an example or

Application: Somalia.

Somalia is famed for being one of the few true anarchies- a state without laws. Since freedom is not restricted, people can do whatever they want. Does this lead to morality? No. In fact, in a Forbes list of the World’s 15 most dangerous nations, Somalia ranked first. Forbes writes “Somalia is the consensus pick for the world's most dangerous destination” ("In Pictures: World's Most Dangerous Countries - 1. Somalia - Forbes.com.") Additionally, this immoral system has terrible economic security, with one of the lowest GDP per capita, ranking 224 of 228. ("CIA - The World Factbook) Let’s compare this with Liechtenstein, which we discussed earlier. Liechtenstein, perhaps the most economically secure nation, has one of the lowest crime rates. Somalia, perhaps the freest nation, is the most dangerous. It seems that money is not the root of all evil, after all.

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*Author’s note: This case requires research to run. Of course, you should research for any debate round, but this one in particular is helped with some good statistics and an understanding of socio-economic principles. Here are some ideas and sources I found helpful:*

CIA World Factbook

US Census (not in the case, but great for these kind of issues)

GunPolicy.org- Shows statistics on national murder rates

For Contention 1, I recommend researching the dependency ratio and replacement rates. How many births are needed to replace a generation, and why does murder cause it to fall short? What economic motivations exist? How much do children and elderly cost to support? Population trends tend to be pretty controversial in their analysis and impact. A good understanding of what you are saying will do worlds of help.

In general, it is a good idea to look up some statistics about nations around the world. Small, wealthy nations like Liechtenstein present very interesting examples.

Rebuttal: The Root of All Good?

by Patrick Ortiz

This case gives a lot of emphasis on the value argument. If morality is the most important value in the round, then economic security should be preferred. It’s up to you to prove why your value and your case are more important, so your best strategy is to start with a good value clash.

Concerning the two contentions, try detaching the ideas from each other and showing that they don’t link. Is morality always related to economic security? Can a free nation be moral?

Value

It is hard to say that morality is bad- for obvious reasons. What you can do is attack Kant’s definition. Much of this, of course, depends on your value and the context of the round. Is morality a suitable value in the context of education? Government? Maybe morality is good, but if you want to take it down, it depends on what your value is and what the context of the debate round is.

Contention 1

This presents the main idea behind the case: economic security and morality are linked. If you can disconnect this link, you are well on your way to winning the round. So how to do it?

One word: Hollywood.

Examples of rich, famous, and notoriously immoral people go to show that morality is dependent on the person, not the economic situation. Additionally, you can even turn this argument- can’t money sometimes motivate us to do bad things? Maybe there is something behind the expression ‘money is the root of all evil’.

Contention 2

So you have severed morality and economic security. Now you have to get personal liberty back in good moral standing. Here I’d recommend looking for examples of forced morality, particularly forced religious conversions. Personal liberty is often an integral part of morality.

Capitalism on Trial

A Value-Centric Negative Case

by Chase Harrington

The facts of the case are these: An unbridled free market does not ascribe to people intrinsic, God-given value, but value in proportion to how useful they are. The defendant capitalism has thrived off slave labor and child labor, it has taught the healthcare community that there is such a thing as “acceptable loss”, and it has ruthlessly destroyed the peaceful villages in Nigeria and the surrounding ecosystem for oil. In light of these facts and the defendant’s long history, I urge the following verdict: Resolved: That when in conflict, economic security ought to be valued above personal freedom

To ensure the utmost clarity in this debate, I would like to present the following definition(s).

**Economic Security**: Measures taken by the government to ensure economic stability, growth, and responsibility. (Operational)

Human Dignity: Ethical standards and rights that all humans deserve, including the rights to life, liberty, property, and just treatment. (Operational)

Social Market: An economic system in which industry and commerce are run by private enterprise within limits set by the government to ensure equality of opportunity and social and environmental responsibility. -Collins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition[[189]](#footnote-189)

The value I champion in today’s debate is human dignity. This standard is a vital when evaluating the practical ramifications of personal freedom or economic security, and will allow us to carefully decide which is preferable when they conflict. The economic model that best preserves human dignity is called the social market. This concept will function as my criterion. In summary, if I can prove that human dignity is the ultimate value, that a social market system leads to human dignity, and that prioritization of economic security leads to a social market, then I have negated the resolution.

Contention One: Human dignity must be protected.

Respect for human dignity is the capstone of morality and the lens to evaluate all government duties by. Dominique de Menil, a French civil rights activist brilliantly summed up my position when she declared, “What should move us to action is human dignity: the inalienable dignity of the oppressed, but also the dignity of each of us. We lose dignity if we tolerate the intolerable.”[[190]](#footnote-190)

Contention Two: Personal freedom is dangerous.

In an economic context, personal freedom heralds laissez-faire capitalism, total business anarchy. While many people associate capitalism with freedom, fairness, and the American way, it is important to distinguish the government restrained capitalism that we enjoy in the US, from the ruthless capitalism of the early industrial revolution you get through personal freedom. I have two sub-arguments against personal freedom:

a. Personal freedom leads to economic catastrophe.

Laissez-faire capitalism was typical in early America. However, over time corporations like Standard Oil became so powerful that they threatened to destroy the competition of the market. In other words, capitalism almost became its own demise. However, in 1890, congress passed the Sherman Act and split up these trusts and monopolies like Standard Oil. This government intervention restricted personal freedom, in the name of protecting the consumer. In the Supreme Court case Spectrum Sports Inc. v. McQuillan, the court explains, "The purpose of the [Sherman] Act is not to protect businesses from the working of the market; it is to protect the public from the failure of the market.”[[191]](#footnote-191)

b. Personal freedom ignores ethical concerns.

Laissez-faire capitalism commodifies people into numbers and completely ignores their intrinsic human worth. Throughout history, families have been torn up as parents or children are sold into slavery that stems from capitalism. Child sweatshop labor is still tragically prevalent to this day and it exploits tens of thousands of children. Even medical corporations are blinded by profit incentives. In order to test potential drugs more cheaply, many large pharmaceutical corporations have shipped drug trial testing overseas to third-world countries. This has allowed them to circumnavigate informed consent laws and take more risks, unfortunately at a different but still very real cost. The most famous example is when medical giant Pfizer killed 13 Nigerian girls when a drug test failed.

Contention Three: Economic security is vital.

By upholding economic security, you are not endorsing government bailouts or a socialistic economy. You are endorsing a social market system where the private sector is controlled by government regulations to ensure that the market remains responsible and stable. This is necessary for human dignity because it gives individual freedom and self-determination, while also preventing exploitation.

In conclusion, the world would be a grim place with personal freedom reigning supreme. Total market collapse, slavery, and the exploitation of children are the historical impacts of how our human dignity fares if the affirmative position of laissez-faire capitalism accepted in today's debate. Only through the superiority of economic security can human dignity be preserved.

Users Manual:

1) There virtually is no dictionary definition of economic security. I created that definition because it seems reasonable. 2) If the affirmative provides adequate definitions, then don’t waste time redefining. The negative case should pack a diverse, quick punch. Don’t waste time. 3) I also created the human dignity definition. 4) Print off evidence of all the examples used. Opponents ask sometimes and it’s nice to be able to provide them with pages of evidence which increases your credibility and gives them less room to argue around the issue. 5) Get your opponent to admit that personal freedom links to capitalism in CX, most will readily concede that.

Rebuttal: Capitalism on Trial

by Chase Harrington

First of all, right from the get-go, you should argue that the logic of this case fails because there is no true comparison. In the intro the case blames a host of evils on capitalism, but neglects to mention that all the same evils (potentially even worse ones) exist in socialistic or communistic countries. Healthcare becomes less ethical in socialistic countries. For example, many Dutch hospitals have been found euthanizing patients without consent because these patients were “blocking beds”[[192]](#footnote-192) (International Task Force.org). The former USSR utterly devastated the environment and land in Russia with absolutely no qualms. National Geographic correspondent Gerd Ludwig writes,

“In their ruthless drive to exploit their nation, Soviet leaders gave little thought to the health of their people or the lands that they ruled. No country is free from the scourge of pollution, but the Soviet example is one of horrifying extremes, one that stems from decades of neglect and the abuse of a vast and once beautiful land.[[193]](#footnote-193)”

Furthermore, socialist East Germany was a stagnant cesspool of propaganda and abuses on human dignity. Human Rights Watch specifically reports, “…human rights violations in East Germany centered mainly on freedom of movement, expression and association”[[194]](#footnote-194)

Value: Human dignity. Human dignity is culturally relative. All cultures have different ideas of what human dignity is because they all recognize that dignity as coming from a different source. China during the Middle Ages valued women in proportion to how many sons they gave birth too. Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Princeton University, believes individuals get their human dignity when they can reason and know that there is a tomorrow. He writes, “Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons”; he concludes, “the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.”[[195]](#footnote-195) For this reason, he can coolly justify abortions on babies up to two years old.[[196]](#footnote-196) Remember, human dignity changes meaning as the source of human dignity changes to fit the worldview or culture. Impact: This value is slippery and cannot evaluate ideas any more then a ruler could tell size without markings.

Contentions 2 & 3) Economic security values people the same way capitalism does, in terms of what they bring to the table. Where capitalism values profit, the economic security paradigm values stability. People’s freedom can therefore be limited and oppressed, and more importantly, businesses loose freedom. Additionally, valuing economic security to the point of government interference often brings disaster. The creation of the Federal Reserve in 1913 led to easy credit and made bad investments seem profitable. Throw in President Hoover’s Smoot Hawley Tariff of 1930, and you have two major causes of the great depression. Fast-forward to the 1990’s, Bill Clinton modified Carter’s Community Reinvestment Act to force banks to give risky loans to low-income families so that they could afford a home. This caused a housing bubble because demand for homes went up which later became unsustainable and when people began defaulting on their loans, America hit the recession of 2008. Lastly I would counter the subpoints with some capitalism good arguments (See my article, Capitalism: a Love-Hate Relationship).

Salute the General… Welfare

A Value-Centric Negative Case

by Jon Bateman

President Franklin Roosevelt once made the astute observation that, “True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.”[[197]](#footnote-197) It is because I believe that true individual freedom cannot exist without first establishing security that today’s resolution- Resolved: When in conflict, personal freedom ought to be valued above economic security.- must be negated.

First, let’s define our terms.

**Economic security:** “Economic security is composed of basic social security, defined by access to basic needs infrastructure pertaining to health, education, dwelling, information, and social protection, as well as work-related security.”[[198]](#footnote-198)

For the purposes of today’s round, the doctrine of economic security means that actions should be taken to ensure the aforementioned necessities to largest number of people in a given country as possible.

**Personal freedom** is defined as Freedom: “The capacity to exercise choice; free will.”[[199]](#footnote-199)

In the context of today’s round, it is the negative’s belief that when a person’s ability to make choices and exercise free will in the economy harms the overall economic security of a nation it should be limited.

Before we examine the support for this assertion, I’d like to clarify one point of the resolution in my resolutional analysis.

Resolutional Analysis: The resolution requires conflict

The resolution uses the phrase, “when in conflict.” This means that in order to fulfill the resolution, the affirmative speaker must prove that when personal freedom conflicts with and harms the overall economic security of a nation, personal freedom should still be valued the highest. Conversely I must prove that when protecting the overall economic security of the nation conflicts with and harms personal freedom, we should still value economic security the highest.

This begs the question: Why should we value economic security the highest?

It is for this reason that I present the value of **General Welfare.** General Welfare is defined as the greatest good for the greatest number of people in a country. General Welfare must be preferred before any other values in today’s round for one simple reason: primacy. President Obama put it this way, “If the people cannot trust their government to do the job for which it exists - to protect them and to promote their common welfare - all else is lost.”[[200]](#footnote-200) We must first ensure the general welfare of our nation before any other personal goals can be accomplished.

This leads to my two contentions:

Contention one: Personal freedom harms general welfare

Economist Friedrich List stated, “An individual, in promoting his own interest, may injure the public interest; a nation, in promoting the general welfare, may check the interest of a part of its members.”[[201]](#footnote-201) A good example of personal freedom harming general welfare is the events leading up to the Great Depression. Before the depression, many people used their personal freedom to buy stocks on credit. As a result, an entire market was propped up on borrowed money, a fact which led to the entire market’s disastrous collapse in 1929. After the great depression, this method of stock buying was made illegal, hindering personal freedom in order to ensure that the irresponsible choices of many individuals could not harm general welfare this way in the future.

Contention two: Economic security promotes General Welfare

In fulfilling the resolution and stating that economic security should be valued above personal freedom, we are saying that it is acceptable to abridge personal freedom in the economy in order secure the economy itself. Take for instance the Federal Reserve’s bank reserves requirements. The Federal Reserve mandates that banks not loan out a certain percentage of the money they possess in order to protect against bankruptcy caused by loan defaults. This limits the banks’ freedom in order to ensure the security and stability of the economy and the people who depend on it. In ensuring economic security, the Federal Reserve is also ensuring general welfare. Whenever we strive for economic security we are contributing to the general welfare of the nation.

In summary, General welfare mandates that personal freedom must be limited and economic security sets the standard for that limitation. It is for this reason that I urge you to vote negative.

Rebuttal: Salute the General… Welfare

by Jon Bateman

We will go down the case point by point and address the holes in it, starting with the definitions.

Economic security: If you look closely, the definition of economic security is really referring to personal economic security, yet throughout the case economic security is referred to in a broad group sense.

Personal freedom: The only word defined is freedom and the definition does not explicitly infer any of the economic connotation that the case conferred upon it.

Resolutional analysis: This is true; no point in contesting it. However, the language used is quite loaded. As you respond, reword it to your advantage. You can also state that the resolution only asks when the two concepts conflict, not when they harm each other.

Value: General Welfare: Taken to its logical extreme, this case supports socialism which is centered around sacrificing individual freedom for the “greater good”. However, it is unlikely that the debater who runs this case is a proponent of socialism. Exploit this. The battle over this value should really be waged during cross-examination. Ask questions like: “Should we always value the needs of the group over the individual?” “Who decides what the General Welfare is?” and “Does your value of General Welfare give the government the complete and total authority to limit personal freedom whenever they deem that it harms economic security?” Also, hammer upon the lack of a dictionary definition for general welfare.

Contention 1: Personal Freedom Harms General Welfare

There are several responses to the contention itself before we address the example. First, ask if denying people of all personal freedom ever benefits the general welfare? State that denying personal freedom doesn’t cause the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people and therefore doesn’t fulfill the definition of general welfare. Second, impact the contention to your case. You may want to concede the contention but state that your value (which personal freedom upholds) is of more importance then general welfare.

Example of the Great Depression: Was it really economic security based policies that solved the Great Depression? There are many who believe that this wasn’t the case. Many contend that the Great Depression did not start to get better until people started to exercise their personal freedom and start new businesses.

Contention 2: Economic Security Promotes General Welfare

When critically examined, this contention is quite circular. It essentially equates economic security and general welfare. Hit upon this. Does economic always benefit the general welfare? Communist countries like the Soviet Union had about the most “secure” economies but general welfare in the U.S.S.R was almost nonexistent. Contend that without personal freedom, economic security can harm general welfare just as well as it can promote it.

Example: Federal Reserve: regulating banks is not limiting Personal freedom but corporate freedom. In addition, many believe the Federal Reserve’s involvement in the economy actually harms and destabilizes the economy.

Other thoughts: It is absolutely critical to take this case to its logical extreme. The case seems sensible and logical until you point out what its philosophy allows the government to do. Hammer home socialist and communist undercurrents in the case’s philosophy.

With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

A Balanced Negative Case

by Cynthia Jeub

When Thomas Jefferson helped pen the Constitution of the United States, he said that these words should be added to Benjamin Franklin’s first draft: “The pursuit of happiness”. After the term “pursuit” was included, rights took on a whole new meaning. No longer was the government liable to deliver something to the people other than the ability to pursue what they wanted. It is because I believe that the responsibility for finances and exercising freedom belongs in the hands of the people, not the government, that I stand Resolved: that when in conflict, personal freedom ought not to be valued above economic security.

Definitions

Personal: “Of, relating to, or affecting a particular person: private, individual[[202]](#footnote-202)1”

Freedom: “The quality or state of being free.”

Economic: “Of, relating to, or based on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.”

Security: “the quality or state of being secure: as freedom from danger, and freedom from the prospect of being laid off.”

Entrepreneur: “One who organizes, operates, and assumes the risk for a business venture.”

Entitlement: “Belief that one is deserving of or entitled to certain privileges”

Resolutional Analysis

We cannot have a blanket statement that Personal Freedom is always, in any conflict, in any situation, at any time, in any nation, with any players, always the best choice. Both Personal Freedom and Economic Security on their own have problems. To minimize and pursue the most equal view, we have to retain choice.

Value

Responsibility is the value I will be upholding in this round because it delivers balance to the resolution. By balance, I mean that we cannot ultimately say that personal freedom is always the best choice over economic security, but neither can we say the opposite. Therefore it is necessary to have an equal value of both. Responsibility means that as individuals, we choose to take initiative for our own finances. It is not the duty of the government to make sure that we have no economic woes, and it’s not the government’s duty to see that our freedom allows for poor discernment. That duty belongs to the individual person, and to recognize that duty is to be responsible. To uphold responsibility, sometimes it is best to choose economic security; sometimes it is best to side with personal freedom. Therefore, if a conflict arises where there is a forced choice between the two, only the most responsible action should be taken.

Criterion

I also offer the criterion of entrepreneurship because in order to have full responsibility over one’s financial situation, it is necessary to develop your own source of income. A paying job means relying on someone else for economic security, and having no income, though an act of personal freedom, is irresponsible. Entrepreneurs harness their needs and their freedom by building a business.

Contention 1: Valuing Personal Freedom leads to entitlement

The opposite of responsibility is entitlement. Entitlement says that individuals deserve something from others, rather than working to get it for themselves. When personal freedom is valued too highly, laziness prevails due to a sense of entitlement. A good example of this is worker unions. In the 2007-2008 writer’s strike from the Writer’s Guild of America, the issue at hand was rights. These writers agreed together that if they couldn’t have the personal freedom to their own creative work—such as DVD production copyright law—they wouldn’t continue to supply television shows with their work. This is a classic conflict between personal freedom and economic security, and it was repeated more recently in early 2011 with the National Football League’s lockout. Leaning affirmative demands far too much for far too little.

Contention 2: Valuing Economic Security leads to entitlement

Thinking that you deserve something from the government besides your human rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—is a sure path to ruin. This is because, when a person stops relying on himself for success, he grows angry when others do not make up for his laziness. This is a visibly paradoxical belief, but it’s prevalent when looking at the options for jobs today. Employers offer, are in fact required to provide, health care for their employees, and minimum wage is defined by federal law. Because of this emphasis on financial security for workers, work ethic has been watered down to mean whatever takes enough time to gain the most money without appearing unproductive. Laws should not value economic security because of the laziness of workers and difficulty it creates for employers.

Contention 3: A balanced view leads to responsibility

Both Economic Security and Personal Freedom, by themselves, give a sense of entitlement to the governed. But as individuals, responsibility should be valued because we stop demanding security and freedom from others and begin to rely on ourselves. The best way to uphold this value is to alleviate poverty with the use of microloans. A microloan is what it sounds like – a small sum of money lent for the purpose of building a business. In poor countries, it’s impossible to get a business off the ground, but it is also hard to get a job. The solution is to give potential entrepreneurs a springboard, so to speak, into helping themselves get out of poverty. A microloan delivers the opportunity to start a business and repay the loan once the business gets going.

The inverse of taking responsibility is that of blaming others. As we’ve seen in varying situations, economic security and personal freedom lead to blaming others for our own lack of money. Self-reliance, opportunity, and responsibility are needed in today’s world.

Extension: With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

by Cynthia Jeub

Quotations

“What feels like a sacrifice now will seem like an investment later on.” –Andy Stanley

“The price of greatness is responsibility.” –Winston Churchill

“When people are in a group, responsibility for acting is diffused.” –Malcolm Gladwell

Direct Responses

Affirmative: Personal freedom needs to be given by the government in order to make the choice to balance the resolution.

Negative: Not only is this chronological snobbery (look it up), but the resolution doesn’t specify government or personal duties. It merely says one ought to be valued above the other.

Affirmative: The negative ignores the resolution. We’re asked to debate “when in conflict…” and the case claims that the two can be balanced.

Negative: My claim isn’t that there is no conflict. My claim is that when in conflict, both need to be valued equally so that the best decision can be made. Sometimes it is best to choose economic security; sometimes it is best to side with personal freedom. Only by voting negative can you value the responsibility that comes from valuing both.

Rebuttal: With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

by Cynthia Jeub

First, balance. Don’t let balanced negative cases throw you off. Your side of the resolution is better than an equal view no matter what the negative says. So prove that. Run your examples the way you would have before, and make personal freedom sound like the awesome thing that it is. And you’ll win.

Value: Responsibility sounds good, but go ahead and turn Stan Lee’s slogan “With great power comes great responsibility” and tell the judge that if they don’t vote affirmative, there is no power to the people. Responsibility *can’t* be valued if freedom isn’t valued higher than economic security.

Criterion: This criterion is not unique to the negative side. It sounds great, but personal freedom allows for entrepreneurship, too.

Applications: Unions, minimum wages, and microloans. This is technical stuff, but it’s easy to understand and win on. Unions aren’t necessarily an example of personal freedom, though they may look like that on the surface. Instead, unions tie down both the worker and the employer, limiting the chances of thinking outside the box and providing the best possible service for the consumer. Minimum wage is not an example of economic security, because though it talks about how much an employee is paid, it puts no limit on whether a lazy worker can be fired. If you work for someone else, you still can’t be lazy. Microloans aren’t an example of balance. They represent freedom: before the microloan comes, a person isn’t free to choose their way of life. They’re just stuck in poverty. But a microloan gives liberty to choose a business, and it’s personal liberty because you’re not working for somebody.

This case is beatable. So go ahead and win against it.

No Conflict

A Kritik

by Travis Herche

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once observed: “True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.”[[203]](#footnote-203)

I believe that economic security and personal freedom never conflict; rather - as Roosevelt pointed out - they are co-dependent. Thus, I will ask you to vote against the resolution in this round.

Let me begin with three **Definitions**.

Wordsmyth English Dictionary defines *Conflict* as “to be incompatible.”[[204]](#footnote-204)

And the following two definitions are operational.

Personal Freedom: The condition of having a high level of personal choice in one’s life.

Economic Security: The condition of having a stable monetary situation and living standard.

Because the resolution is logically inconsistent, there is no way to measure it. Therefore, frameworks will not be relevant to this debate. I neither concede nor contest my opponent’s value as it no longer has an impact on the round.

Contention One: Economic Security requires Personal Freedom

Throughout the ages, economists and businessmen have striven to create a perfect economic system. While it is unlikely that they will ever succeed, there is one characteristic that all successful economies have in common: freedom. It is now a well-documented historic and economic fact that freedom leads to economic growth and prosperity, while oppression leads to poverty.

To prove this, we need look no further than the **Application** of **Korea**. Korea was divided into two countries following World War II. North Korea controlled its people, depriving the economy of the freedom it needed to grow. Consumers were not in a position to influence the market with their choices because the government was making all the choices for them. Small businesses vanished under central planning, and economic stagnation set in. To date, millions of North Koreans have starved to death because they don’t have the freedom to get food. Grass and tree bark are staples of the North Korean diet.

Meanwhile, South Korea has opted for a very different approach. It has given its citizens free reign to develop and grow the economy. Free enterprise caused the South Korean economy to flourish into the 15th largest in the world, with booming markets in almost every industry. South Korea’s only major economic liability is its proximity to the repressed and belligerent North Korea.

The Korean peninsula makes it clear that Economic Security requires Personal Freedom. South Korea’s economy is fifty times larger than North Korea’s because its people are free.

Contention Two: Personal Freedom requires Economic Security

William de Cooning once said: “The trouble with being poor is that it takes up all of your time.”[[205]](#footnote-205) When you have to toil long hard hours every day just to make ends meet, you could hardly be called free. The American Dream includes a concept of Financial Freedom - the ability to make your own decisions without being constrained by poverty.

Freedom cannot survive when the people live in squalor. But when they break free from monetary woes, they gain control over their lives. Life decisions are made based on choice, not necessity. Thus, financial freedom is about much more than just not worrying about the next paycheck. It impacts every area of life. The brilliant economist Ludwig von Mises said it best: “The freedom that the market economy grants to the individual is not merely ‘economic’ as distinguished from some other kind of freedom. It implies the freedom to determine also all those issues which are considered as moral, spiritual, and intellectual.” [[206]](#footnote-206)

Contention Three: No Conflict

The resolution suggests that there is a conflict between personal freedom and economic security. But we’ve seen that such a notion is laughable. Economic security cannot exist without personal freedom, and personal freedom cannot exist without economic security. There is no conflict. That means you don’t have to choose between the two, as the affirmative would have you do. You need only acknowledge that we need both, and cast a negative ballot.

Businessman Roy Scott once wrote about a realization he had early in life that drove him to success. He said: “If I had enough money I wouldn't have to spend over 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year, doing something I'd grown to hate. I could use money to buy my freedom. I could use my freedom to live my life as I chose.”[[207]](#footnote-207) That’s what the negative position is all about.

Rebuttal: No Conflict

by Travis Herche

This is one of the strongest possible negative cases this year. The resolution cries out for it, and your judges are likely to be sympathetic to its conservative leanings. That doesn’t make it unbeatable, but it does you mean you need to take it seriously.

As in every other situation, whining only makes you look weak. Don’t complain that this case is a kritik. If it deserves to be in the round, it deserves to be argued against. If it doesn’t, the most persuasive way to defeat it is to argue against it anyway to show the judge how ludicrous it is. So if you have a personal stigma regarding kritiks, you need to let go of it. It only makes you more vulnerable to them.

The Neg will try to neutralize your value and criterion. Persuasively, you want to make sure this doesn’t happen. Look for any opportunity to reintroduce them in the round, and refer back to them often.

Don’t argue just on your opponent’s terms. You’re at a big risk of letting your aff contentions be sidelined. Fight for them! If any are dropped, point that out. Push your contention applications too. Don’t spend more than 2 minutes and 30 seconds in the 1AR on the negative case, or your own arguments will fall into obscurity.

You have a good chance at dismantling the case from the definitions down. If your own definitions conflict with the negative’s, roll up your sleeves and run a definitions debate. Run reasons to prefer your definition over your opponent’s. Then explain how the neg case makes no sense with your definitions and dismiss it.

It’s likely that you and the negative interpret Personal Freedom very differently. This may make negative responses to your contentions a little confusing unless the negative really knows what he’s doing. Exploit that weakness.

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