Monument Midseason 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 NCFCA speech and debate league. Applications and citations may be outdated, so give attention to checking all hyperlinks before attempting to run in competition.

**Resolved: That governments have a moral obligation to assist other nations in need.**

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Section 1: Articles

Discussions on key terms, theories, philosophies, and applications

Understanding LD in This Year’s Resolution

Resolutional Articles

Applications, Philosophies, and Insights on the 2012-2013 LD Resolution

If a man empties his purse into his head,

no man can take it away from him.

An investment in knowledge

always pays the best interest.

~ Benjamin Franklin

**You’re a Fascist**

*Understanding Modern Politics*

by Travis Herche

**How to Defend Your Value**

by Travis Herche

**Unintended Consequences**

*The Danger of a Broad Resolution*

By Caleb Spencer

**Epic Fail**

*The Resolutional Effects of Government Incompetence*

by Caleb DeLon

**Old Guys, New Times**

by Blaire Bayliss

**Bailout**

*Exploring Macroeconomics and Monetary Rescues*

by Michael Tcheau

You’re a Fascist

Understanding Modern Politics

by Travis Herche

When people evaluate a government, they usually talk about how people come to power and how laws are made. Sample government types are democracy, monarchy, and meritocracy. The form of government can make a big difference, but it’s far from the most important profile for a society.

I like to describe a society according to its socioeconomic profile: its approach to the rights of its citizens. In this article, we’ll take a brief tour through all five basic approaches, with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Government and socioeconomic types are related, but not directly interdependent. One could theoretically have a capitalist autocracy, or a socialist democratic republic, or any other combination. The questions behind socioeconomy are not about how power should be distributed, but how it should be used.

All five core socioeconomic constructs exist on a circular gradient. For example, anarchy bears striking similarities to both capitalism and communism, and is often a brief landing point during a transition between the two.

**Bias disclaimer:** I am a Christian. While I’ll do my best to present every idea as objectively as possible, my beliefs about God strongly influence my ideas about government. This article is not meant to persuade you to agree with me; it’s meant to educate you about your own position. Try to read it with an open mind, acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of your political views.

Secular Humanism vs Religious Dogma

At the heart of any socioeconomic construct is a basic idea about humanity. This is the true conflict between conservatives and liberals - and because it is not discussed openly, progress in a venue like a congressional debate is impossible.

**Secular Humanism** asserts mankind as the basis for morality. The term can be misleading, because it is as much a religion as any other belief like Judaism or Islam. Humanists might use phrases like “divine spark” or speak of “the god within all of us.” They believe that humans are inherently good and that science, logic, and education are the solution to all of man’s ills.

If someone misbehaves, it’s not really their fault. They’re just a demigod being pushed the wrong direction by society. “Badness” can be fixed by proper upbringing and indoctrination. In other words, humanists believe that *a perfect society is possible*.

Granting that, a small government that respects only negative rights isn’t just foolish, it’s inexcusable. We should move as one race toward our ever-approaching utopia. Humanist philosophy will answer our questions. Science will solve our problems. These concepts are as sacred to the humanist ethos as belief in an omnipotent God is to the Christian ethos.

But the highest and most sacred tenet of humanism - the shining beacon of hope that will guide us toward evolutionary ascension - is education. It must be perfected, it must be free, and it must be aggressively regulated by society. Non-public education is an enormous threat because it is unpredictable and therefore produces unpredictable citizens. Until everyone is receiving the same standardized education, a perfect society is impossible.

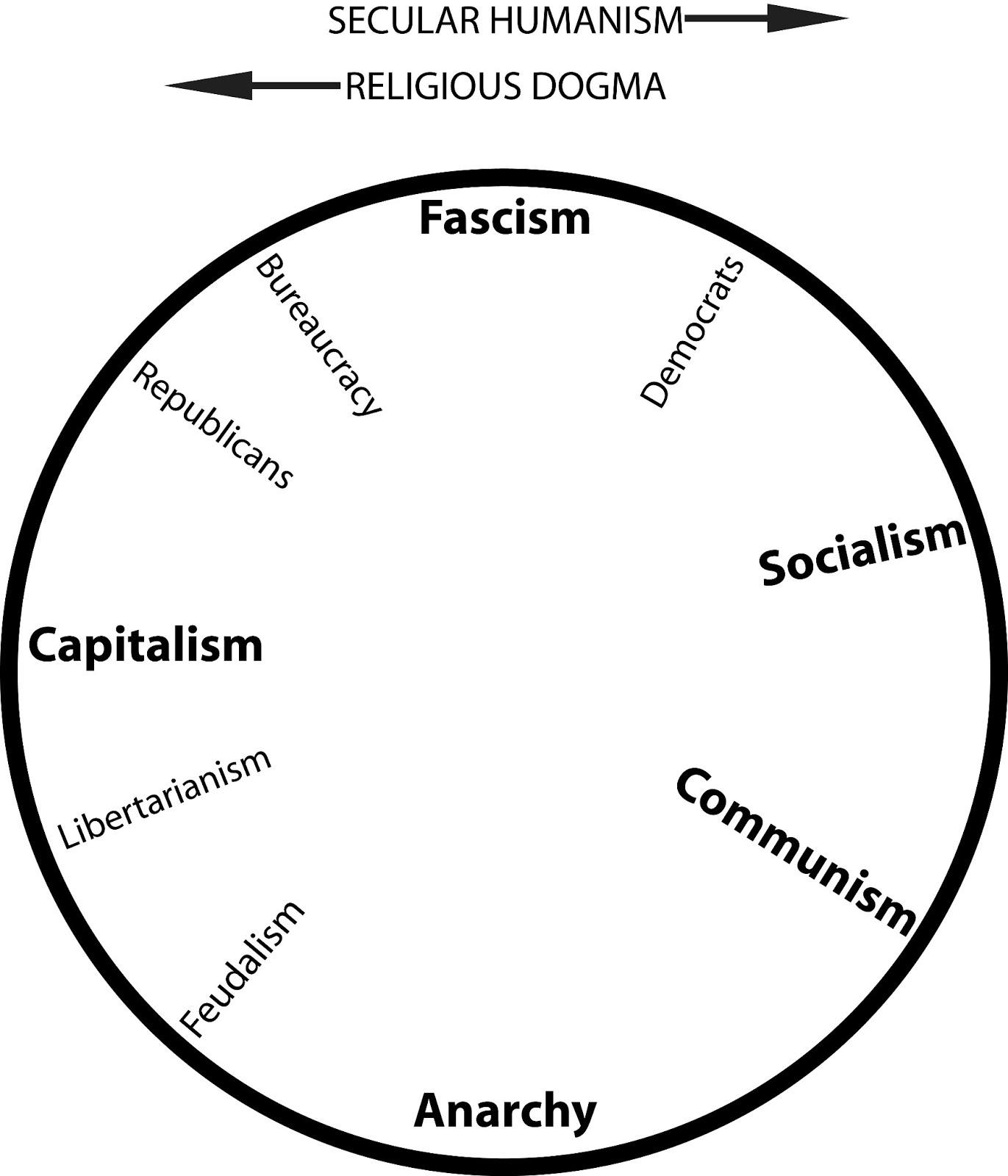
Socialist policies are the natural result of humanism.

**Religious Dogma** describes the idea that morality is external to mankind. Humans have no divine spark; they must submit to some outside God or moral law. For example, Buddhists must follow the eightfold path toward enlightenment. Not doing so is wrong. Genesis says that the imagination of mankind is nothing but constant evil.

Granting that, the dream of a perfect society is folly. Any attempt at perfection puts too much trust in fallen souls. People will use power to dominate others, so power must be mitigated by limiting the power of government. To a religious dogmatist, government should only be strong enough to keep citizens from hurting each other. Beyond that, it should leave people alone as much as possible. Behavior will be legal even if it is frowned upon, because government and society are distinct and separate entities.

Will some of the weak and poor get left behind? Sure. But at least they won’t be oppressed. And hopefully, even the poorest will be raised up by a thriving economy, and private charity empowered by low taxes.

Capitalist policies are the natural result of religious dogma.



Anarchy: No Rules.

Anarchy is a system devoid of government. Everyone does what is right according to his own lights.

**Why it’s awesome:** Don’t you hate it when people tell you what to do? Anarchy puts a stop to that! Anarchy is the perfect opposite of oppression and the purest expression of freedom. Just do what you want.

Anarchy is appealing in particular because government cannot exist without some of coercion and rights violations. For example, taxing someone for even a penny violates her right to property. She worked hard and earned that money! The only solution is to have no government at all.

**Why it’s a flop:** Anarchy is unsustainable. Even on a small scale, it rarely lasts more than a few minutes. People need leaders. They create rules for themselves. They seek out order and logic. There are few chaotic points in history - like the French Revolution - but no society ever that could be described as a true anarchy.

Suppose all governments were disbanded right now. Your cousin Joe immediately decided to steal your copy of the Red Book - because that’s what any looter would do in a chaotic situation, right? Well, you go to Joe and try to reason with him. When that doesn’t work, you turn to violence. You punch Joe right in the face and take the Red Book back.

Joe sneaks into your house that night and beats you up. Then he takes your Red book and a bunch of the stuff in your room. By now you’ve had enough of Joe’s shenanigans. You get a friend to go with you, you tie Joe up, take all of his stuff, and you burn his house to the ground.

Joe comes back with some friends - and baseball bats. Will the violence ever end?

When he’s done getting even with you, Joe starts robbing other people. He terrorizes the entire town. A few of victims come to you. “Are you the guy who stood up to Joe?”

“Yeah,” you say. “We have to stick together.” More and more refugees join your group. Eventually you have enough people to attack Joe’s group and take everything back. You form a little band, moving around town and protecting each other. You keep watch at night in case Joe or some other looter attacks. You improvise weapons that you find off the land. You scavenge for food and distribute it.

One day, one of the people in your band mugs another one for extra food. When you find out, you’re mortified! You exile the thief into the wasteland forever.

At this point, you have an armed force and a legal system with enforcement. You probably even have a border - territory that you’ll fight to defend. Though primitive, you have a government.

The pattern of escalating violence creating dependence on protection happens wherever there is no government. Like air rushing into a vacuum, violent order is created to stop the madness of anarchy.

The higher the stakes and the more chaotic the situation, the more desperately order is needed. A good example of this is the absolute authority of a warship captain. His word is law, because on the high seas, mutiny is catastrophic.

Capitalism: Freedom and Property Rights.

Capitalism says: you can do whatever you want with your stuff. No one can violate your negative rights (life, liberty, property, and privacy), and the government taxes you as little as possible, maintaining only the bare minimum necessary to protect rights. That means maintaining a police force, legal system, military, and not much else.

**Why it’s awesome:** Capitalism has been empirically proven to increase the overall wealth of a society more than any other system. That’s a big deal. Historically speaking, the vast majority of humans tottered on the brink of starvation as a way of life - and billions fell in. While it can’t stamp out suffering completely, capitalism pulls people out of the muck and mitigates widespread starvation. The more free-reign is given, the more wealth improves, leading to quality of life, health and longevity, scientific innovation, and other benefits.

Capitalism is also appealing for ideological reasons. It is the most effective way to protect negative rights. Pure capitalists believe that some taxes are necessary, but taxation for any purpose other than protection of negative rights is theft.

**Why it’s a flop:** Capitalism is heartless. Did you get hit by a car? Are you badly in need of medical care that can save your life? Well, it’s all yours - as long as you can pay for it. Lost your job, spouse, or limb? Don’t expect the government to help! And don’t expect any public services like national parks, free education, or social security either.

Capitalism also tolerates unacceptable behavior. Want to shoot up hard cocaine in the privacy of your own home? Go for it! It’s your cocaine, do what you like with it. Go ahead and drive drunk; as long as you don’t hit another car, we can’t touch you. Build a casino that destroys lives. Hire a prostitute. Dump toxic chemicals in the river. Build an unsightly skyscraper in a nice suburb. Massacre the wildlife population on your land. If you own it and you’re not directly hurting someone else, capitalism will tolerate it.

Capitalism does nothing to protect the worker. There is no minimum wage; no labor safety laws; nothing. You could put children to work in sweatshops or make serfs work your land for nothing but room and board.

Many people call themselves capitalists because they don’t like socialism, but few are truly willing to deal with the implications of capitalism. If you support the drug war, chances are you’re actually a fascist.

Fascism: Property Rights yes, Freedom no.

Fascism still respects property rights in that sense that you own what you earn or buy. On the other hand, what you do with your stuff is decided by the government.

Fascism earned a terrible reputation at the hands of Italian nationalists and the nazi party. It usually comes with baggage like despotic control, elimination of free speech, and nationalist or racist campaigns. But these effects don’t lie at the heart of fascism. Whether that bad reputation is deserved is up to you.

Most republicans fall somewhere between capitalism and fascism. There are thousands of fascists in homeschool speech and debate (though they would deny the title vigorously because they don’t hate Jews).

**Why it’s awesome:** While fascism doesn’t boost an economy as well as capitalism, it still maintains the investment-reward structure that’s so critical to growth. At the same time, it frees the government to prevent misbehavior in the private sector through regulation. The United States temporarily embraced fascism during World War II, distributing ration cards to control what people bought and mobilizing factories to produce war machines. Without these measures, victory would have been almost impossible.

After the war, the siren call of fascism drew us ever nearer. The signs of fascism are all around: stringent testing of new drugs, restaurant health inspectors, and the banning of marijuana. Drive your car where you want: but not while inebriated, and not above a certain speed, and not in certain areas. It’s your body, but you can’t cripple your heart with sugary soft drinks or buy alcohol after a certain hour, and we’ll more than double the cost of cigarettes with heavy taxation. It’s your land; build what you want on it: as long as it satisfies building codes and zoning laws and you have all your permits in order.

We’ll keep cotton farmers from crashing the market by paying some of them to grow a different crop - or not to grow anything at all. We need more corn, so we’ll subsidize it. Brushing your teeth is good for you, so we’ll mandate that all schoolchildren do it after lunch. We’ll dictate how much energy your refrigerator can use and how much water your toilet can flush. We’ll tweak everything so it works better, nicer, and healthier. We’ll fix the misbehavior of the vulgar citizen.

Note: all the examples in the previous two paragraphs are state or federal laws in modern America. While not a perfectly fascist society, it gives us a better picture than the emotionally-charged image of the Third Reich. Try to forget the taint that European nationalism has left on fascism. Approach this idea as objectively as you can, because if you’re reading this, there’s a very good chance that you’re a fascist.

Surprise!

**Why it’s a flop:** Fascism isn’t necessarily tied to despotic oppression, but the two are hard to separate. When a government opens the hood of a society and tinkers around inside, the society will naturally resist - even if the laws are all put in place for the citizen’s good. Enforcement requires a very powerful police force, a massive bureaucracy, and ubiquitous propaganda. Taxation skyrockets. Violent riots have to be suppressed. I know of no example of a fascist society that did not heavily regulate free speech - or worse.

Fascism also carries some disturbing moral implications. It crushes choice. It keeps you from doing something you want with your own money - even if you’re not hurting anyone else. Maybe you want to eat some crispy fried chicken. You know it’s not good for you, but surely a wing every now and then is okay. But if you live in New York, your eating experience is going to be much less delicious because trans-fat is illegal. The government is doing your thinking for you - protecting you from yourself. That’s not just annoying, it’s insulting. And when government regulates you out of your way of life, it becomes terrifying.

Finally, fascism requires a lot of paperwork. Regulation slows business down, narrowing margins and making new start-ups rarer. On a broader level, any government regulation defies market forces, which slows down the economy. That’s a price fascists are willing to pay for a well-run society.

Socialism: High taxes.

While fascism lets you keep your stuff, a socialist society levies high taxes to create a massive public sector. It guarantees its citizens positive rights like food, shelter, medical care, a job, and education. Socialism can be measured by how much of your paycheck goes to the government. The higher the tax rate, the more socialist the society. A perfectly socialist government takes everything you earn and invests it in public services. Odds are, you work for the government too. At the very least, you’re dependent on it for your day-to-day needs and probably receive some sort of welfare check.

**Why it’s awesome:** In free societies, people fall through the cracks. They freeze on the streets while big businessmen sip champagne in their warm mansions. Socialists believe that no one should be left behind - but the basic economic principle of scarcity guarantees that the private sector will never accomplish that. The solution? Government takeover.

Socialism offers the dream of a well-ordered and fair society that satisfies the basic needs of everyone. It educates and indoctrinates to create ideal citizens. Nothing is wasted. Rewards are based on need and merit, not on inheritance or dumb luck or ruthlessness.

**Why it’s a flop:** If socialism worked, it would be a thing of beauty. But sadly, it doesn’t. The problem is that it takes away the reward for investment. Why start a business if you can’t keep what you earn? You’ll be standing in line at the grocery store whether you do or not. Socialism is based on the hope that citizens will act out of altruistic desire to better their world; but most people are selfish. While capitalists harness that selfishness to create wealth for everyone (albeit not an equal distribution of wealth), socialists stick their heads in the sand and ignore it. The result is crippling dependence on government hand-outs.

This glaring flaw in socialism was demonstrated by the creation of the socialist worker’s paradise: the Great Leap Forward. Chairman Mao Zedong turned China upside down with complete socialist reforms, including a government takeover of agriculture. Production immediately ground to a halt because farmers had no reason to keep working. 42 million people starved to death. That’s more than the entire population of New York and Florida.

Socialism also requires vigorous, brutal control of its citizens. Dissent threatens to upset the delicate balance of power because socialists cannot separate “society” from “government.” If you factor in starvation and the political measures needed to enforce it, socialism has killed more people in the last century than genocide. In fact, those numbers aren’t even close.

Communism: No Property Rights.

If everyone is working for and receiving from the government, why bother with currency at all? Let’s just eliminate the entire concept of ownership. Everyone cooperates in a give-and-take based on fairness. If you need something, we’ll give it to you. Communism is the logical conclusion of socialism, just as fascism is the logical conclusion of bureaucracy.

**Why it’s awesome:** I am genuinely moved by the sheer idealism of communists. I get choked up with emotion, as if I were watching a sunset! Communism is such a beautiful idea that it’s hard to even wrap my mind around how great it could be. It’s a clean solution to every last one of capitalism’s flaws.

Many families are run based on communist ideals. For example, my wife and I don’t have any sense of ownership between each other. We own everything collectively and make group decisions. I spend money she earns, and vice versa. It works pretty well for us.

I believe in the heaven described in the Bible. While I might be mistaken, it seems to be described as a theocratic communist utopia.

**Why it’s a flop:**  It’s easy to just say that communism doesn’t work because it has failed in the past - but look at the failures of other ideas. Is liberal democracy bad just because American efforts to spread it to Iraq resulted in a bloodbath? We must be cautious not to shrug off an idea just because it has failed in the past. But we can’t discount failures either.

It’s hard to measure communism because a true communist society has never existed. Enforcement requires too much government action. It collapses into something else immediately.

The primary flaw with communism is ideological. Take everything that’s wrong with socialism and double it.

If communism could be sustained - if it could bring everyone above a social minimum - I doubt anyone would object to it. But such a scenario is inconceivable. For communism to work, there would need to be enough of everything to go around and citizens would need to behave altruistically. Call me when that happens.

Conclusion

In terms of debate, your aff and neg cases imply a certain position on the socioeconomic wheel. Know your position so you can defend it from attacks, and learn to identify your opponent’s so you can tear it apart in your speeches.

Usually when I teach people the content of this article, it makes them uncomfortable - perhaps because they didn’t realize how broken capitalism can be, or they don’t want to agree with the same socioeconomic policy that Hitler embraced. If you feel uncomfortable right now, I’ve done my job. My hope is that you’re challenged to search more deeply into your beliefs about how government should be run. God bless you!

How to Defend Your Value

By Travis Herche

In debate, it’s not enough to say *what* you think; you have to explain *why*. To show the judge why your value is useful for the round, you should run at least one **value link**. This is a sub-point for the value that explains why the judge should use it. A value link explains the connection between the value and resolution. Equally important, your value links are your only fortification against a counter-value from your opponent.

There are four basic kinds of value links:

**1) Intrinsic Good.** The worth of your value is part of what defines it; it can’t be taken away or altered or turned bad. A good test of intrinsic worth is to say “if we were to make this thing as evil as possible, would it still have value?”

Capitalism is a market system that is widely credited as being the most effective at building wealth. While it doesn’t build wealth for everyone equally, it has historically been a tool that pulled even the lowest classes up from the muck. But what if we made Capitalism as evil as possible? What if we said that it only made one person rich, and he used his wealth to oppress everyone into pseudo-slavery? Well, then capitalism would be evil. It would be something to get rid of without a second thought. Therefore, Capitalism has no intrinsic worth.

On the other hand, Life is special. While lives are often remembered by what they accomplished (George Washington Carver invented peanut butter; Neil Armstrong walked on the moon), every life holds some kernel of precious intrinsic worth that cannot be taken away. Take the life of Osama bin Laden. He was a truly evil man. He was bent on destroying an entire civilization by mass-murdering its people. He was killed ten years after presiding over the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Upon his death, the people of the free world rejoiced, but with restraint. Because even though Osama had killed many - even though he had lived his life evilly - he still had worth. Bin Laden had a soul, and that made his death tragic. And if the loss of someone like him can be tragic, Life must have intrinsic worth.

When discussing a moral resolution, an intrinsically good value can be appropriate. The logic: we’re trying to decide what is good, so we should use this broad measure of goodness to figure it out. Popular values with intrinsic worth include Justice, Human Rights, and Freedom - but there are hundreds of options if you keep your eyes open. The current resolution is usually interpreted as moral.

You could just call your value link “Intrinsic Good”, but this type of value link can take many forms and expressions. Think of this as a pattern used to defend a value, even if the exact argument is something like “Moral Imperative” or “Worth Dying For”. This defense of a value is very common, especially when used against the second kind of value link:

**2) Extrinsic Good.** Something has extrinsic worth if it *leads to* good things. If something is good, but it fails the intrinsic worth test, it is an extrinsic good.

Democracy is a form of government that makes a government accountable and transparent to its people. It is associated with better laws and respect for freedom. One could say that democracy leads to intrinsic goods - but if the people voted for bad politicians and bad laws, the system would collapse. Thus, democracy can be called an extrinsic good.

“Democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried.” - Winston Churchill

An axe can be used to cut something down, break down a door, clear a path, or kill someone. When used positively, an axe is a good thing. When used destructively, it is bad. This means it does not have intrinsic value, and its extrinsic value is also questionable. Whereas democracy is generally good, axes are just neutral. They’re good at what they do - but it’s impossible to predict what that will be. Thus, an axe probably can’t be called an extrinsic good. It is morally neutral.

Extrinsic values argue “Since we’re trying to decide what is good, let’s use this standard that ensures goodness as a meaure.”

Common arguments that follow the extrinsic good pattern might be: “Foundation of Society,” or “Protects Life.” Listen carefully to the argument to see if the value is good on its own, or good because it leads to something else.

A value can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. For example, Life is inherently good but can lead to other things as well - like the invention of peanut butter.

**3) Topic Context.** Intrinsic and extrinsic goods make excellent values for moral resolutions. But what about the other kinds of moral charges? That’s where topic context comes in. It argues that a value is suitable because it relates directly to the resolution. It is closely tied to the idea that values must be specific to what they are measuring.

“Government Legitimacy is determined more by its respect for popular sovereignty than individual rights.” The definition of legitimacy is important here, but this could easily be interpreted as an amoral resolution: a government could be legitimate and evil. Thus, a value like Power might be appropriate, justified by a value link of Establishes Governments. This value link follows the topic context pattern. “We’re talking about government legitimacy, so use this value that establishes governments.”

“Powertools are more efficient than hand tools.” We’re measuring efficiency, so a value like Finish Time might be good. Note again that this is an amoral value - efficiency could help us build a tree house or a torture chamber; the resolution doesn’t care. It just wants us to discuss efficiency. We want the judge to use our value of Finish Time because it is the most precise way to measure efficiency. So we use the value link of Efficiency is Fast, which is a topic context link.

Topic context links can be used for resolutions with any moral charge, including good old moral ones.

“Justice entitles everyone to a sincere defense by a legal professional.” We’re measuring justice, which is generally understood to be a good thing. Perhaps we use the value of Presumed Innocence - the idea that a person is innocent until proven guilty. If we used the value link “Cornerstone of Justice”, we’re arguing that Presumed Innocence is a key part of our understanding of justice. That’s topic context, and it’s also extrinsic good (because it leads to justice).

**4) Usefulness.** Whatever else can be said about the value, the judge needs to be able to use it to make a decision at the end of the round. Some value links step outside the debate and speak directly to the judge, asking him to use the value that will make his life easier. Here are two common examples:

“Clarity”. Other values might be functional, but this value is so easy to understand and offers such a clear decision point that it ought to be used.

“Provides Meaning.” Other values are such confusing, imbalanced measures that they skew the entire resolution to the point that it doesn’t mean anything. This value not only measures the resolution, it helps establish it.

The first three value links are common, logical, and diverse. The fourth is the black sheep of the family, because it technically qualifies as a funky kind of argument known as a kritik. Kritiks go way beyond the scope of this article. For now, just know this: the fourth kind of value link is hard to run correctly. If you do run it, consider mixing it in with a more standard argument or two. While you’re at it, avoid value links like “Fairness” or “Equal Ground” - they have nothing to do with whether or not the value is *true* and take way too much time and effort to prove.

As the negative, you can run reasons to prefer instead of value links. These are also sub-points, and they follow the basic patterns above, but with an exception: since you now know what you’re up against, you can directly contrast your values. Your Reasons To Prefer shouldn’t just explain why your value is good or your opponent’s is bad; they should explain why yours is *better*. Put all your value debate into once concise position - the reasons to prefer or value links - and the entire round will be much easier to keep track of.

Because it’s their first chance to respond to the negative value, the affirmative should be allowed to run new reasons to prefer in the 1AR. Most affirmatives just cross-apply their value links, though.

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 and that the judge agrees that it is a good way to measure the round before moving on.

Unintended Consequences

The Danger of a Broad Resolution

by Caleb Spencer

If you tell a 5-year-old to clean his room and then walk out, when you come back you’re in for a surprise. I have learned this lesson many a time with my 5 younger brothers. Young kids like to take simple instructions, like “clean your room,” and twist it into something you never meant. Unless you give them very specific details about how they are to go about it, you most likely are not going to get what you wanted; instead you may get exactly the opposite of what you expected. Can you say peanut butter and jelly sandwich stuffed underneath the covers? It’s not on the floor anymore.

In many ways, this year’s resolution is a lot like that 5-year-old child being told to clean his room. It’s very broad and far reaching without a lot of specifics. There are many different kinds of needs and different kinds of assistance which could be in play here. For the affirmative speaker, you’ll want to limit what is in view to something specific, something tangible that the judges can get their hands around and agree with. For the negative speaker, you’ll want to paint the resolution in as broad a setting as you can, arguing that, as written, the resolution is too broad and can actually result in harm rather than help. So, let’s look at some historical examples that can be used by both sides to further their argument.

1. The Philosophy

From the negative’s perspective you’ll want to show that there are potential unintended consequences if we affirm this resolution. The philosophy behind this is the idea that all assistance is not good assistance, and that all needs are not legitimate needs. For example, let’s take the case of the country of Georgia. In 1991, this former Soviet Republic broke away from the Soviet Union as it began to crumble.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, by 2008, the tensions between Russia and Georgia were high for a number of reasons. Primarily, the Russians continuously attempted to influence and provoke turmoil within the country. In the Georgian region of South Ossetia, protests against the Georgian government had escalated into an armed conflict. The Georgian military had sent troops to maintain control of the region. Russia claimed that 2,000 civilians had been killed and over 30,000 refugees had fled from Georgia to Russia. While these numbers could not be confirmed, many believed that Russia, sensing an opportunity to recover some of its lost land and influence, sent in what it termed “peace keeping” forces to assist the people. This included a naval blockade by the Black Sea fleet, a land invasion by the 58th Russian army, and support from the 76th Pskov airborne division. While the rest of the world community condemned the Russians for their aggression, Russia justified their actions as helping another country in need. [[2]](#footnote-2) [[3]](#footnote-3)

The resolution says a government has a moral obligation to assist other nations in need. The actions of the Russian government can be construed to fit the resolution. A *nation* is defined as “a people who share common customs, origins, history, and frequently language; a nationality.” [[4]](#footnote-4) *Assist* can be defined as “to give support or aid.” [[5]](#footnote-5) Using these definitions, the government of Russia was fulfilling its moral obligation by assisting the nation of South Ossetia in their hour of need, whether it wanted it or not.

2. Other Examples

Another current example of how the resolution, as it is written, can be exploited for harm is the case of China and its policy towards Africa. “In trying to depict its current dealings with Africa as ‘win-win’ co-operation, China deliberately seeks to portray Africa's current relations with the Westas exploitative. Unlike China, its leaders claim, the West continues to hold African countries hostage through a combination of unequal trade deals, lack of access to capital markets, aid dependency, financial deregulation and economic liberalisation …”[[6]](#footnote-6) What China is not stating openly is their covert efforts to gain control of African countries by building infrastructure and providing services, only to turn around and seize control of those assets and industries when the African governments are unable to repay the Chinese. Just like Russia, China’s fulfillment of their moral obligation to assist these needy nations comes with an exacting price.

A final example is the current conflict in the Congo, where the notorious M23 rebels are being assisted by neighboring Rwanda and Uganda. While publicly the governments of these two nations are supporting the current government of Congo, behind the scenes they may actually be the cause of the situation. “That is due to the dominant opinion inside the U.N., the aid community and Western media that the leaders of Rwanda and Uganda are not well intentioned pursuers of peace. Rather, they are seen as the cause of much of the instability through their alleged backing of the M23 and other militias. The strategy in Kigali and Kampala, say their accusers, is to create chaos, then be called in to make peace, a nefarious plan born of a desire to both improve regional security and establish an economic dominance over eastern Congo’s considerable mineral and metal resources, such as gold, diamonds and coltan.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Once more, we can see where affirming the resolution can result in unintended harm, in that we have the governments of Rwanda and Uganda publicly stating that they are assisting another nation, the Congo, in their time of need, but actually using this time of need for their own benefits.

3. How to Apply It

To use this approach you will want to make sure that you contest any definitions that narrowly define the terms assist and need. Instead, you will want to paint them in the broadest terms possible. In Cross X, ask them what type of assistance is specified in the resolution? The answer, of course, is none. Then, make the point that all types of assistance are in play, as a result. Ask them what type of need is specified in the resolution? The answer, once more, is none. Again, make the point that all needs are in play. Then ask if it is always good to assist others? The point of these questions is to frame the resolution in such a way that you can show that the potential harm can exist if the resolution is affirmed.

In your NC you will need to show your judge how the resolution can be applied in a harmful manner. The current situation with Syria might be a good, real world example, as opposed to just a hypothetical example. Once again, our friends in Russia are providing us with an excellent case of harmful actions in an attempt to fulfill the resolution. In this instance, Syria is a close ally of Russia. This is true for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that Syria is a large military customer of Moscow. As such, they have a vested interest in seeing the government of Syria preserved. So, from their perspective they can easily agree that the legitimate government of Russia has a moral obligation to assist its ally, the nation of Syria, in their time of need in order to put down the rebellion for, what they believe to be, the good of the country.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Make sure that you argue throughout the round that the resolution is too broad to affirm, and can result in harm instead. A more narrow resolution could be affirmed, as assisting others is a value that we should espouse, but as written, an affirmative vote can result in the negative value of harm – which is what we must resist.

4. The Flip Side

For the affirmative, you will want to pre-empt any attempts by the negative to paint the resolution as too broad. There are generally three types of foreign aid which the congress votes on: economic, military, and agriculture or food aid. [[9]](#footnote-9) You could also focus on disaster relief, such as the Haiti earthquake or Japanese Tsunami. Specifically focusing on one of these types of aid, along with a definition of need which includes the idea of requiring relief[[10]](#footnote-10) will go a long way in thwarting the argument that the resolution is too broad.

Definitions are again very important. You cannot let the negative speaker use the broad definitions. You would do well to have multiple sources with a narrower and well defined use of the key terms. Also, you might consider using a definition for obligation which does not raise it to the level of a binding requirement, but instead, more of something that ‘ought’ to be done.

CONCLUSION

Just like a 5 year old child, this year’s resolution needs to be carefully supervised. It’s important to be consistently directing all of your arguments to either narrowing your scope of the resolution, or broadening the scope depending on your stance on the resolution. This includes definitions, contentions, and examples. A consistent message will be crucial. As the negative speaker you will want to show the potential dangers of the resolution as its written. As the affirmative speaker you will need to show that you have your 5 year old under control.

FURTHER READING

Here are some extra resources for those who want to learn more:

Mbaye, Sanou. "Africa Will Not Put up with a Colonialist China." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 02 July 2011. Web. 18 Dec. 2012.

"The Abuse of Foreign Aid." *The National Interest*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Dec. 2012.

"The Abuses of Aid." *TripleCrisis RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Dec. 2012.

Epic Fail

The Resolutional Effects of Government Incompetence

by Caleb DeLon

“Whatever it is that the government does, sensible Americans would prefer that the government does it to somebody else. This is the idea behind foreign policy.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Comedian P.J. O’Rourke humorously expresses an undeniable truth: Sometimes, we just wish the government would leave us alone. While this is an understandable sentiment toward one’s own government, it no less applies to international assistance.

Governments are not perfect—far from it. They often fail, and sometimes they are downright incompetent. In this article, I’d like to discuss the reality of governmental failure and explain how this indisputable truth can be used to your advantage. First, we’ll look at the reality of governmental failure, including a few examples. Next, we’ll discover how some bad arguments are invalidated by this reality. Finally, we’ll uncover some ways in which governmental failure helps you succeed.

1. Governmental Failure is Real

I don’t think anyone in their right mind would argue that governments never make mistakes. In fact, a solid argument can be made that governments do more things wrong than they do right. As Thomas Paine said, “Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Governmental incompetence is on full display in multitudinous realms, just two of which are governmental assistance to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake and foreign aid to Africa.

According to human rights researchers Bill Quigley and Amber Ramanaskaus, “The UN estimated international donors gave Haiti over $1.6 billion in relief aid since the earthquake (about $155 per Haitian) and over $2 billion in recovery aid (about $173 per Haitian) over the last two years. Yet Haiti looks like the earthquake happened two months ago, not two years. Over half a million people remain homeless in hundreds of informal camps, most of the tons of debris from destroyed buildings still lays where it fell, and cholera, a preventable disease, was introduced into the country and is now an epidemic killing thousands and sickening hundreds of thousands more.”[[13]](#footnote-13) We now know that the cholera epidemic sickened half a million people and resulted in at least 6,400 deaths.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Economist and expert on foreign aid Dambisa Moyo provides another area of governmental failure: “Evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that aid to Africa has made the poor poorer, and the growth slower. The insidious aid culture has left African countries more debt-laden, more inflation-prone, more vulnerable to the vagaries of the currency markets and more unattractive to higher-quality investment.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

It is patently obvious that governmental incompetence and failure is all too real. Although their motives are to be applauded, governments often fail to attain the ends they set out to achieve. As the great economist Milton Friedman once aptly stated, “The government solution to a problem is usually as bad as the problem.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

2. Governmental Failure Invalidates Bad Arguments

In his work *The Ultimate Lincoln-Douglas Debate Handbook*, Marco Djuranovic writes, “Lincoln-Douglas debate [asks] students to explore arguments about abstract concepts, standards of behavior and competing visions of what kind of a world we should strive to create.”[[17]](#footnote-17) That description encapsulates so much of what I love about LD: It is a debate about overarching principles, a battle between two opposing worldviews.

That’s why I so despise debate rounds that are based on applications. Don’t get me wrong—examples are fantastic, and I would never run a case without them. However, applications are the icing on the cake. Covering up your central position with a nice-looking exterior is what they do best. When the icing is misused as a cake replacement by a debater’s failure to articulate his or her central premise, the result is sickeningly sweet and too often an utter waste of 45 minutes.

I’m concerned for this year’s debates—I’ve already seen too many cases that put forth examples and draw conclusions from them without understanding the underlying assumptions they are making. These cases all fail to realize the impact of governmental failure. Let me explain the argumentation errors I perceive on both sides of the resolution.

On the Affirmative, I see values such as life and liberty being upheld. Those are great standards for us to use in determining when a moral obligation exists. The case will then go on to articulate several examples where governmental international assistance furthered this end. Finally the conclusion is stated: “These examples show that governments do have a moral obligation to further Value X. Government Y has helped trillions of helpless individuals, and thus has fulfilled its moral obligation.”

Aside from the “trillions” part, that’s the conclusion of many debate cases this year. Because these few examples had beneficial results, we can safely declare that furthering Value X is a universal governmental obligation. (Bad logic alert!)

Now the Negative responds. The Negative debater’s case uses the standard (value) of Human Dignity or National Sovereignty to determine when a moral obligation exists. Arguing that international assistance harms Value Z, the case goes on to provide many helpful examples of these tragedies. On the subject of the Affirmative case, the Negative demonstrates that the international assistance in the Affirmative examples did not actually further the Affirmative value. The Negative also provides a separate example where international assistance actually *harmed* the Affirmative’s own value.

And finally the conclusion comes in: “Because governmental international assistance harmed Values X and Z, the governments were not obligated to assist in these examples, and therefore it can logically be assumed that governments are never morally obligated to assist.” (Bad logic alert again!)

The case logic is essentially as follows:

Affirmative: Beneficial results, therefore obligation.

Negative: Harmful results, therefore not obligation.

The central problem with this type of argumentation is this: Neither the Affirmative nor the Negative have upheld their respective burdens! The resolution is not, “Resolved: That governmental international assistance has beneficial results.” Unless you are running an Efficiency Negative (discussed below), the resolution has nothing to do with results. The resolution asks us to determine when governments have obligations, not how well the governments fulfill those obligations.

On the Affirmative side, I see two problems with an example-based “beneficial results” approach.

Affirmative Problem I. Beneficial Results Don’t Create Obligations

An action may have beneficial results without being a moral obligation. For example, running in the Race for the Cure to raise money for breast cancer research is beneficial to the Susan G. Komen foundation and to the value of Life. However, it is obviously false to say that everyone has the moral obligation to run in a Race for the Cure.

A pettier example would be cooking a Christmas ham. Cooking a ham for 5 hours at 400˚ Fahrenheit is beneficial in that it produces a tasty ham, while cooking the ham for 2.5 hours at 800˚ Fahrenheit yields only black, disgusting ash. The first method of cooking is more beneficial in that it furthers the value of Tastiness, but again—cooking ham at 400˚ Fahrenheit is not an obligation.

Impact: The Affirmative has not upheld the resolution! The Affirmative can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that international assistance upholds a whole host of positive ends—life, liberty, safety, national sovereignty, human dignity, you name it—without affirming the resolution. The Negative can simply say, “Yes, international assistance certainly has beneficial results. But although it is beneficial, it is not a moral *obligation* for governments to assist. This is because….” That response allows the Negative debater to dismiss the entire Affirmative case in 15 seconds and go on to their case for the next 6 minutes 45 seconds. That’s not where you want to be as the Affirmative.

Affirmative Problem II. The Affirmative Conundrum

If beneficial results create obligations, don’t we have the moral obligation to increase our beneficial results by increasing our international assistance? After all, according to Barack Obama himself (and rated True by Politifact), only about 1% of the federal budget goes to foreign aid.[[18]](#footnote-18) Can’t we afford a little bit more, especially if it would save more lives? And if we’re obligated to increase our assistance, are we obligated to double or triple it? That would save lots of lives! Where does this cycle end? When the only standard for obligations is beneficial results, you get conundrums such as this one.

On the Negative side there are also two problems to this example-driven approach.

Negative Problem I. One Example Disproves

One example where international assistance furthers the Negative value disproves the entire Negative case and proves the resolution true by providing a moral obligation based on the Negative’s own standard. For example, with the value of National Sovereignty (the argument being that international assistance shatters the national sovereignty of the country receiving it), all the Affirmative has to do is produce one example where international assistance did not harm national sovereignty. If the Affirmative can do this, they’ve demonstrated that governments do sometimes have moral obligations to assist other nations in need using the Negative’s own standard. When the Negative debater focuses on the results of assistance, he or she is setting the standard for the Affirmative *way* too low.

Negative Problem II. Failure Doesn’t Eliminate Obligations

The fact that governments can fail to uphold Value X does not, in and of itself, logically lead to the conclusion that upholding Value X is not a moral obligation. For example, I have the moral obligation to be kind to my siblings. Do I always uphold that obligation? Of course!

Okay, okay—fine. No, I *don’t* always uphold my obligation to be kind. But does that mean that I never really had an obligation? Of course not! If I fail to uphold an obligation, that is my problem—it is *not* a problem with the obligation. Obligations exist without regard to our ability to uphold them (or our lack thereof).

For a great example of a Negative case that avoids the “bad situations” trap, read Travis Herche’s case in the 2012-2013 NCFCA Red Book. My negative case in that same Red Book is another example.

If you don’t understand the impact of governmental failure on the resolution, you may very well write an amazing case that proves a different resolution.

3. Governmental Failure Helps You Succeed

This article will not only contain warnings—I also want to give you some tips to help leverage your new understanding of governmental failure.

For the Affirmative, I have two recommendations.

Affirmative Recommendation I. Find a Rock-Solid Thesis

If you don’t remember anything else from this article, remember this: Your value and your thesis are the most important parts of your case. Your value because it is the standard you propose we use to determine when moral obligations exist, and your thesis because it is a one-sentence reason to vote for you. Your thesis is, of course, based on your value—your main argument must be inseparably tied to your standard.

In my Affirmative case in this sourcebook, my thesis is that *Governments have the moral obligation to preserve life through the provision of basic needs*. That one sentence encapsulates the message of my entire case. Your thesis should do no less.

If you have a solid thesis, examples are like icing on the cake—they serve their original purpose in making everything look wonderful. Just don’t neglect the cake itself.

Affirmative Recommendation II. Concede that Governments Fail

You gain no strategic advantage and lose precious time if you argue that governments do not fail when they are assisting other nations. On the contrary, conceding that governments fail is to your advantage! I would recommend including in your case an explicit concession of this fact. That way, when the Negative debater brings up an example of governmental incompetence, you can simply cross-apply your concession and say something such as this: “Judge, while I readily agree that governments often fail to assist effectively, using their failure as grounds for denying all moral obligations is simply not warranted. Yes, governments fail—but they still have the moral obligation to pursue [insert positive good] because, as I’ve said, [insert thesis].” You can add other responses if you wish, but those two sentences all by themselves are a sufficient rebuttal for every negative example.

On the Negative side, I also have two recommendations.

Negative Recommendation I. Find a Rock-Solid Thesis

Sound familiar? Yes, you should have an incredible thesis no matter which side you’re on. If Lincoln-Douglas debate were made up of five one-sentence speeches, your first speech would be your thesis. Since our speeches are a tad longer than one sentence, your first speech (and every other speech) should be centered on your thesis. All the arguments, rhetoric, examples, and information in your case must justify their inclusion by how well they support your main argument.

Don’t rely on your examples to prove your case—that’s not their purpose. Your examples are to illustrate your amazing thesis.

Negative Recommendation II. Use Efficiency as a Standard

“The government failed; therefore it did not have an obligation.” That’s not a valid argument…yet. You need one more step: a standard for when an obligation would exist. By using Efficiency (or something similar) as your standard (value), you transform all your arguments about governmental failure from logically erroneous to logically valid. The main argument in an Efficiency-centric case would be presented this way: “Governments have a moral obligation to not only throw resources at a problem, but also to ensure that their efforts have at least some measure of results. If governmental assistance is not efficient (i.e. fails), the government has no obligation to assist.”

Efficiency-based argumentation is perfectly valid, and one of the most potentially powerful approaches to the resolution I’ve observed this year. The main downside to this approach is that, as with all Negative standards, the Affirmative wins if he or she can provide one example of where governmental assistance is efficient. As the Negative, you have lots of options to prevent this loss.

* You can refute all examples of efficient foreign aid.
* You can argue that because obligations require effective practical outworking, moral obligations can only be discovered in hindsight.
* You can argue that because no form of assistance is fully efficient, none are obligatory.
* You can argue that all forms of assistance are *overall* inefficient, and thus not obligatory.

If you’re willing to invest some time, running Efficiency as your standard is a potentially devastating Negative strategy.

In summary, a basic understanding of governmental incompetence and its effects on the resolution is absolutely essential. Governments often fail epically in pursuit of noble goals. Example-centric debate is invalidated by this reality because obligations exist independently of our ability to achieve them. Both Affirmative and Negative debaters should invest time in developing a solid reason to vote for their side; neglecting the thesis statement in favor of more examples is a recipe for failure.

Because you now know that governments fail epically, you won’t.

Old Guys, New Times

By Blaire Bayliss

Socrates never discussed Haiti. Aristotle never advised us on Syria, Kant did not discuss his views on foreign intervention and we are left clueless as to Plato’s opinion on Iraq. But despite the fact that these topics are new, the resolution is rich with philosophical background. The moral obligations of government is a topic that has been long discussed and debated. What are the moral obligations of government? Are governments held to the same ethical standards as individuals? What is the purpose of government? Are governments, as collective non-entities, even capable of holding moral obligations? This article outlines a few basic philosophies to guide you as you journey through the resolution.

Sources of Moral Obligation

So what are the moral obligations of government? A moral obligation is defined by Merriam Webster as: an obligation arising out of considerations of right and wrong; the social force that binds you to the courses of action demanded by that force.[[19]](#footnote-19) Simply put, a moral obligation is anything the government has a duty to do, out of a sense of duty, right and wrong, responsibility et cetera. The government can derive its sense of moral obligation from three main sources:

Purpose of Government:

Philosophers such as John Locke and Tomas Hobbes argued that governments are created for a reason. Governments have a purpose and as such, they are obligated to fulfill that purpose. The philosophy of constitutionalism specifically states that governments must hold true to their founding principles, ideals and purposes.[[20]](#footnote-20) It could be said that the government has a moral obligation to fulfill its purpose.

Legitimacy of Government:

It is said that a government is legitimate when it has the right to rule, and the authority needed to be called the governing authority over a state. Some philosophers have argued that in order to have political legitimacy, governments must adhere to certain standards. For example, Rawls argued that governments must respect the will of the people. If government failed to listen to the will of the people, Rawls argued, it lost its legitimacy and could no longer be seriously considered a ‘government’.[[21]](#footnote-21) Thus, political legitimacy could be considered a source of moral obligation- something the government must do or else lost its title of government.

Ultimate Right and Wrong:

Universal standards for right and wrong can, and have been applied to government. If there are universal standards for what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’ that applied to all entities, regardless of circumstance, it follows that governments would be held to these moral obligations. The true debate here lies in whether or not such standards exist.

Capability of Moral Obligation

Collective Responsibility:

The resolution states that governments have a moral obligation to assist other nations in need. That statement raises a few questions. For one, can governments have moral obligations? For another, do governments have the same moral responsibilities as individuals? The philosophy of collective responsibility attempts to answer those questions by taking the position that groups can be held morally responsible for their actions. Critics of collective responsibility argue that it is impossible for groups to hold moral obligations. There are many defenses for that argument. For one, it is impossible for actions to be taken completely ‘collectively’. All actions can ultimately be boiled down to things done on an individual level. Another argument is that in order to act upon moral obligations, you must be able to act upon intentions. For example: the intention to help others, the intention to save lives or the intention to end hunger. Because only individuals can have intentions, it must be impossible for a group, collective or organization to hold moral obligations.[[22]](#footnote-22)

However, defenders of collective responsibility argue that we already do hold groups and organizations responsible in a moral sense for their actions. This is because when individuals are in a group, that group experience influences their thoughts. Thoughts and ideas can arise from relations between two or more members of a group that a singular person would not have considered alone. Because of this, groups and/or organizations are in fact capable of holding moral obligations and should be held to ethical standards. This includes moral obligations. However, because groups function differently from individuals, the philosophy of collective responsibility assumes that individuals do not have the same moral obligations as groups. For example, it could be said that governments are not subject to the Golden Rule, because that principle applies mainly to individuals.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Examples of Moral Obligations

Affirmative:

Global Justice:

The concept of Global Justice, or Social Justice as it is sometimes known, is the idea that all men are equal and that government should work towards the equality of all men. Sometimes matched with the value of Societal Minimum, Global Justice believes that so long as the government is capable of promoting justice, it should. That includes any and all cases where humans are in need. By this theory, the government is more than simply a body that does the will of its people or serves a simple function in the world- the government becomes a body for good.[[24]](#footnote-24)

The Categorical Imperative:

When can we say that something is absolutely right or absolutely wrong? Philosopher Immanuel Kant attempted to provide a universal standard for ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ with his categorical imperative. He believed that all actions could be morally justified if they passed two criteria: 1) If everyone in the world took this same action, there still be order and peace in society and 2) The person or group taking the action had good intentions and believed it to be a morally justifiable action. Because governmental assistance to nations in need would pass both of these criteria, the resolution is affirmed through Kant’s categorical imperative.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Mill’s Theory of Liberty:

Mill once stated, “Its business is to increase to the utmost the pleasures, and diminish to the utmost the pains, which men derive from one another.” According to the political philosophy of Mill, government is created for the purpose of protecting liberty. That pursuit of the protection of liberty was not necessarily restricted to simply one country or one group of people. Mill believed that individuals created government for the protection of their liberties, and thus governments were obligated to seek the protection of liberty. Interestingly enough, Mill did not qualify his beliefs with any concept of state lines. His belief in the moral obligation of government to protect liberty seemed to apply not only to that government’s people, but also to other nations where the people were in need of liberty.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Just War Theory:

What do attack and assistance have in common? At first glance, not a lot. However, the two do have similarities, especially if you believe that assistance can include assistance in the form of force, troops or arms. Aristotle discussed Just War Theory, and when he believed the use of force was truly warranted. Two of his justifications for the use of force were: if human lives may be saved, or the use of force will result in comparative justice. If one of those qualifications were met, then the use of force was not only justified but was actually morally obligated by government. John Rawls added to that list that the use of force on another state would be justified if the action was taken for the purpose of protecting human rights.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Negative:

Locke’s Social Contract:

Locke’s social contract theory put forth the idea that the government is only morally obligated to do what it was created to do. That is, what the people believe it should do. The government and the people create an unwritten social contract, by which the people agree to forfeit some of their rights to the government in exchange for that government’s protection. This social contract is based off of the idea that the government is the servant of the people and can only do what its people desire. This social contract principle seems to hold strongly to the neg position- the government has only a moral obligation to its own people, and thus should only assist nations in need if that’s what its people desire it to do.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Nationalism:

The concept of nationalism essentially states that every country must have the right to collective self-determination. Each state is sovereign and as such, deserves proper decision making power. To violate that right by interfering in a state’s internal affairs would not only be a violation of collective self-determination and the political system, but it would also be a slap in the face to that country’s legitimacy. Each nation has its own identity, its own culture and its own way of life. That should be respected. This highly isolationist way of thinking points out an interesting concept on the negative side- the concept of national sovereignty. How should we react when assistance violates a country’s self-determination, political system, culture or way of life? Can it truly be morally obligated to take such action?[[29]](#footnote-29)

Domestic Preservation:

Governments first and foremost have a duty to their own people. However, that does not mean they cannot assist other nations in need. In some cases, assisting other nations can actually help a nation in the long run. Hobbes’ Leviathan theory stated that government’s main purpose was to promote order and that the government should be big enough so that it can crush any problems and disorder. This Leviathan should provide peace to its country. But what should be done when the internal affairs of other nations threaten the order within your country? In the past, governments have taken preventive measures- assisting other nations in need in order to prevent the chaos from spreading into their territory.[[30]](#footnote-30) John Rawls mentioned this as another justification for the use of force. While this does make the case that assistance can be useful to both the supporting and the supported country, this does raise the question of where moral obligations are directed. Can it truly be said that a government has moral obligation to assist other nations, if that nation only acts for selfish reasons? Or must the government have altruistic intentions for it to count as a moral obligation?[[31]](#footnote-31)

Bailout

Exploring Macroeconomics and Monetary Rescues

by Michael Tcheau

The grey city lay in rubble in the dead of winter. Families huddled together for warmth. Parents comforted their children and tried to distract them from the sharp pangs of hunger. Some peeled off the leather from the soles of their shoes and tried to chew them. Others boiled snow and tried cooking a skinny rat, dead from disease. Suddenly, a sound filled the city. It started off as a low rumble, and then grew. The people weakly stood and looked up to the sky. What filled their eyes was a sight they had never seen before. Boxes parachuted down all over the city, dropped from airplanes bearing the distinctive white American star. Inside the boxes, the people found food, medicine, blankets, clean water, and even chocolate. In the Berlin Airlift of 1948, the US army provided food to the city of West Berlin. The bailout saved an entire city from starving to death.

More than half a century later, Germany is now the one conducting bailouts for their European counterparts. In fact, not only Germany, but also nations throughout the world, regularly send monetary aid to boost failing economies. The impacts of these stimulus package bailouts range from wildly successful to downright failures. When examining the resolution, “Governments have a moral obligation to assist other nations in need,” we need to consider the great economic implications of sending multiplier boosting monies to spark the failing engines of various national economies. I’d like to begin by saying that, because of the nature of the league, this topic is controversial, and specific positions may be heavily frowned upon. However, I wish, not to convince you of any specific opinion, but simply provide you with applications and economic argumentation that you can run in a debate round, and use to perhaps increase your own knowledge of macroeconomics.

We’ll start by looking at several important economic terms. Once we understand these terms, we’ll take a look at how macroeconomics works as a science. Then we’ll examine several instances of economic bailouts and examine the impact these bailouts had.

Definitions of Important Terms:

**Macroeconomic Policy** - The top-down policy by government and central banks, intended to maximize [growth](http://www.economist.com/economics-a-to-z/g#node-21529925) while keeping down inflation and unemployment. The main instruments of macroeconomic policy are changes in the rate of interest and money supply, known as monetary policy, and change in taxation and spending, known as fiscal policy.[[32]](#footnote-32)

**Money Multiplier** - The way in which a change in spending produces an even larger change in income. The multiplier formula is always 1/marginal propensity to consume.[[33]](#footnote-33)

**Money Supply** – The amount of money available in an economy.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**Inflation** – The decrease in buying power that each individual currency unit has. Identified by an across the board rise in price of goods and services.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**Interest Rate** – The amount of interest that would be paid during a year divided by the amount of money loaned.[[36]](#footnote-36)

**Keynesian Economics** - The idea that economies could sometimes be stable (in equilibrium) even when they did not have full employment, but that government could remedy this under-employment problem by increasing public spending and/or reducing taxation thereby increasing the level of aggregate demand in the economy. Follows the principles set forth by British economist John M. Keynes.[[37]](#footnote-37)

**Austrian Economics**– A school of economic thought that advocates controlling money supply so that free markets will naturally equilibrate. Follows the principles of Milton Friedman, with some minor variations that tend towards complete laissez-faire economics.[[38]](#footnote-38)

**GDP** – Gross Domestic Product. A measure of economic activity in a country. It is calculated by adding the total value of a country’s annual output of good’s and services.   
Calculation: CGIX. C (consumer spending) + G (government spending) + I (private investments) + X (net exports).[[39]](#footnote-39)

**Velocity of Circulation** – The speed, or number of times, that money changes hands in an economy. Calculated by GDP/Money Supply.[[40]](#footnote-40)

**Monetary Base** - The total amount of a currency that is either circulated in the hands of the public or in the commercial bank deposits held in the central bank's reserves. This measure of the money supply typically only includes the most liquid currencies.[[41]](#footnote-41)

**Marginal Propensity to Consume (MPC)** - MPC represents the proportion of an aggregate raise in pay that is spent on the consumption of goods and services, as opposed to being saved.[[42]](#footnote-42)

**Average Propensity to Save (APC)** - average propensity to save (APS) is an economic term that refers to the proportion of income that is saved rather than spent on goods and services. Also known as the savings ratio, it is usually expressed as a percentage of total household disposable income (income minus taxes). The inverse of average propensity to save is the average propensity to consumer (APC).[[43]](#footnote-43)

Explaining Macroeconomics

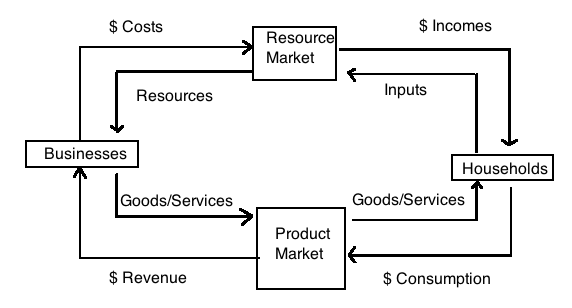
There are two main conflicting macroeconomic theories. While there are almost hundreds, these two theories dominate the global economic debate.

1. Keynesian Economics

The theory of Keynesianism is preached against in conservative circles. I ask you to bear with the thought process and truly try to understand this important ideology. You cannot support or refute a theory unless you first understand it.

A. The problem

Keynesian economics follows this train of thinking: A recession is caused because households stop spending and investing money, and save instead. While saving seems frugal and wise, the failure of households to spend money means that businesses lose money. When businesses lose money, they are forced to lay off workers. The laid off workers actually make up part of the consumers who buy from businesses. These workers stop spending as well, because they just got laid off. The result? More businesses lose even more money, and investors also lose money. The businesses have to lay off more workers, which means less people are able to spend money to buy products. (See circular flow model figure 1.1) This cycle continues till the economy collapses into a depression, possibly never to recover in the foreseeable future.



*Figure 1.1 Photo Credit Michael Tcheau*

B. The Solution

Keynesian economic policy advocates one simple word: spending. The more spending in an economy, the easier it is to avoid the cycle of a depression. Unfortunately, because of boom and bust forces, recessions are always going to occur.

**1. Domestically**

In order to combat the opening phases of a recession, Keynesian policy advocates simple measures taken to encourage spending. Phase one begins with the interest rates. When interest rates are high, people have a greater incentive to put money in the bank to collect interest, thereby increasing the marginal propensity to save. By suppressing interest rates to eyeball popping lows, people have little or no incentive to put money into banks. Rather, investment, purchasing, and borrowing are encouraged, increasing the marginal propensity to consume. This means that businesses should never lose enough money to have to lay off a worker. Unfortunately, once in a while, a large business or bank (like in the 2007 recession) does indeed start laying off workers. The solution is a bailout where the government lends the company money in the hopes that they will not need to lay off workers and thereby enter the downward spiraling recession cycle.

**2. Internationally**

In many ways, a global economy works in much of the same way as a national economy. When nations go bankrupt they have no ability to buy exports from other nations. When exports go down, those countries lose money and could potentially go bankrupt as well. The solution is as follows: By injecting money into, or “bailing out,” other nations, bankruptcy is avoided. This rests on the basis of several important steps. When money is injected into an economy, it flows through the central bank. There is a common misconception that printing money from the Federal Reserve automatically means that suddenly money is introduced into the market and there is mass inflation. Wrong. Money cannot simply “enter” a market unless there is a way for it to be distributed (think money laundering).

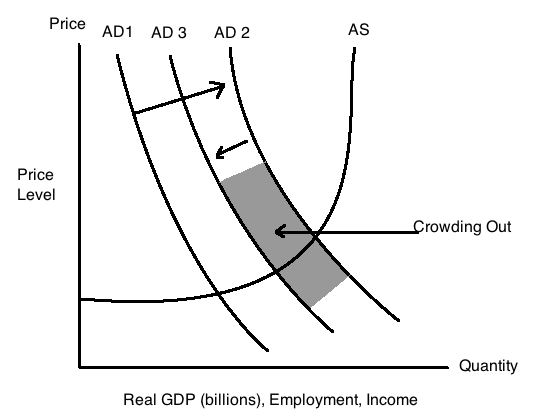
So, when the Federal Reserve prints cash, money supply (see definition) does not necessarily increase, instead monetary base (see definition) increases. This is very important. Just because monetary base increases, it does not necessarily mean that money supply increases. Money supply comprises cash, bank deposits, money market funds, accounts in non-bank institutions etc. Since lending institutions are required to only retain a percentage of the loans they make in the form of cash ‘reserve ratio’ money supply due to the creation of credit is many times the size of the monetary base. However if at the time the money base is being expanded the money multiplier is contracting, it is very possible for money supply to contract despite Federal Reserve money supply expansion does not mean that the money is accessible to the private sector. It needs to be slowly added into the money supply. This is usually done through banks. When banks borrow money from the Federal Reserve, and lend it out to a consumer, that allows the printed money to enter circulation. Once it enters into the economy, money multiplier and velocity of money come into effect. These two principles actually are the market devices that increase money supply.   
  
 So, in short, bailing out foreign governments is the idea of lending them large sums of money with the hopes that the expanded money base can release cash into the supply by using banks. Added with the money velocity and money multiplier, this money can then be used to bolster failing economies by preventing businesses from closing down and laying off workers (refer to figure 1.1).

2. Austrian

Austrian economics follows almost perpendicular principles to Keynesian economics. Instead of believing that spending boosts GDP and bolsters failing economies, Austrian economics follows closer principles to the free market.

A. The Problem

Austrian economics advocates a government “hands-off policy.” When a recession occurs, Austrians argue that only poorly run business go bankrupt and have to lay off workers. When people are unemployed that means that there is easy access to human capital for entrepreneurs. So, while the good businesses survive, entrepreneurs can invest money into a failing market and start up even new businesses, reversing the cycle from a bust into a boom. When government interferes in the market, it crowds out. This theory is explained as follows. If a government funds a deficit by borrowing money, then the price of money (interest rate) must increase. When the price of the money increases, investment is weakened due to rising interest rates. This links into the same problems as discussed with the model flow chart in the Keynesian section depicted in figure 1.2.

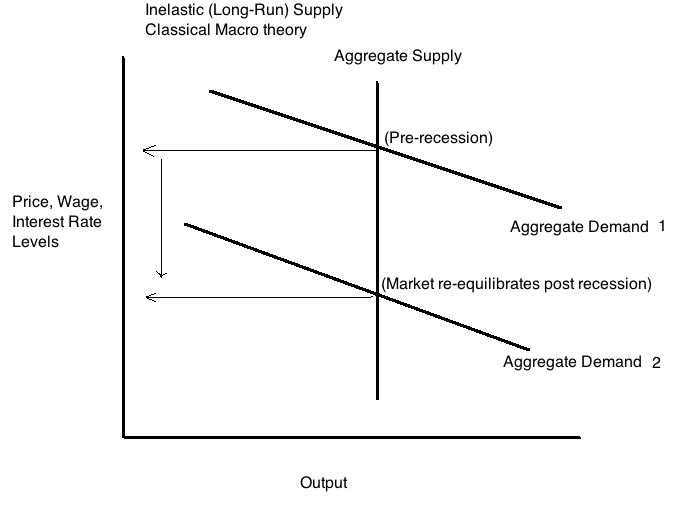


**AS= Aggregate Spending, AD= Aggregate Demand**

*Figure 1.2 Photo Credit Michael Tcheau*

B. The Solution

The solution is to leave things alone. The natural market equilibrates at its own time; trying to stimulate the economy only makes things take longer due to the crowding out effect. Austrians also promote a theory known as “Say’s Law” which is that “supply creates its own demand.” This theory promotes the idea that when reductions in aggregate demand occurred, there would be an eventual adjustment in lower price, wage, and interest rate levels that would return the economy to full employment. This would trigger an expansion in consumer and investment spending, thus increasing aggregate demand and leading to a self-correction. See figure 1.3. Therefore, Austrians argue that governments should not bail each other out.

  
*Figure 1.3 Photo Credit Michael Tcheau*

Affirmative applications

1. Germany, Greece Bailout

For the past half-decade or so, the Eurozone has struggled along in an attempt to equilibrate their economy. Unfortunately, productivity increases in some countries like the UK and Germany are offset by economic failures in other countries like the “PIIGS” (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain). Greece was hit the hardest. Their government went bankrupt due to spending far too much on welfare programs and not receiving enough tax revenue due to failing businesses. Because the Eurozone does not allow each individual country to print its own euros, Greece was unable to stimulate its own economy. Enter Germany, who pumped billions of dollars into the Greek infrastructure. The Wall Street Journal reported that, “Greece's conservative New Democracy party and its likely Socialist coalition partner, known as Pasok, worked on a proposal to ask other euro-zone countries for an extra two years to meet Greece's fiscal targets, officials involved in the preparations said. The request would mean that on top of the €173 billion ($218.7 billion) bailout plan agreed early this year, Greece would need an additional €16 billion in financing from Europe, these officials said. The plan would present Northern Europe's creditor nations, led by Germany, with a dilemma. Europe is eager to help a new Greek government to strengthen popular support for the country's tough bailout program and to combat Greece's deepening recession.”[[44]](#footnote-44) The result of the bailout prevented two important events from taking place. First, Greece stayed in the Eurozone. Had Greece exited (Grexit), the massive debt that it owed would have become a default debt. Countries would have lost billions of dollars, and the Eurozone, and the rest of the world, would have spiraled into a recession. Second, it helped equilibrate Greece’s struggling infrastructure while a new government took over. The affirmative can use this application to argue that government assistance, in economic forms, to other nations, is beneficial not just to Greece but also to the creditor nations who make money off of interest.

2. Abu Dhabi, Dubai Bailout

The Eurozone and the US weren’t the only nations with economic woes. In 2009, the United Arab Emirates were hit especially hard. Dubai fell deep into debt due to an unexpected reduction in exports, and a heavy spike in unemployment. With a major player in the UAE going bankrupt, fellow UAE member, Abu Dhabi decided to give Dubai a helping hand. According to BBC, “Dubai's government has announced it has been given a $10bn (£6.13bn) handout from United Arab Emirates neighbor Abu Dhabi to help it pay off its debts. It will use $4.1bn (£2.5bn) of the money to bail out the government-owned investment company Dubai World.”[[45]](#footnote-45) The result of the bailout was an increased trust in Dubai’s credit rating. Abu Dhabi managed to retain its position of power in the UAE because Dubai did not need to default on the debt that it already owed Abu Dhabi. This application carries the same kind of impact as the first application does.

3. South Africa, Swaziland Bailout

Believe it or not, Africa also encountered much financial trouble during the 2007 credit crunch. Swaziland, a small African nation, faced a deficit that threatened to kill their economy. A slump in government funding of certain programs increased unemployment at a fairly dangerous rate. Enter South Africa, who offered to lend Swaziland money to pay off their debts. According to Reuters, “South Africa is scheduled to release in September the first tranche of a 2.4 billion dollar bailout to Swaziland, Africa's last monarchy, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan said in parliamentary documents released on Monday. The first tranche of three equal payments will be 800 million dollars and subject to Swaziland meeting certain fiscal and technical conditions, Gordhan said in response to written questions. The loan was negotiated a year ago when Swaziland's government was battling a funding crisis caused by a slump in revenues from a regional customs union that usually accounted for two-thirds of its income. However, the loan was not immediately signed by Swaziland because of its objections to Pretoria's conditions on political and economic reforms in the land-locked southern African kingdom, where political parties are banned.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

4. IMF bailout of Thailand

In 1997, the Asian financial crisis struck Thailand with a vengeance. With rising unemployment and debt, Thailand was on the verge of economic collapse. Unfortunately, Thailand represented one of the most powerful Asian nations of the time. A collapse of the Thai economy meant a default on numerous loans given by other nations. The default would mean that production would stall, and exports would drop. In short, if Thailand went bankrupt, it would be a huge disaster. The International Monetary Fund, or IMF, comprised off many different governments, decided to lend Thailand enough money to keep their economy from stalling. According to the New York Times, “The International Monetary Fund today [August 21, 1997] approved the first part of a $16 billion international rescue package for Thailand, and the Clinton Administration announced that it would help provide short-term loans, if needed, to help Thailand stem a currency crisis that has threatened other nations in Southeast Asia. The action taken by the I.M.F today, which was expected, authorized up to $4 billion in loans to the Thai Government following the devaluation of its currency last month. Japan and other Asian nations said last week that they would take the primary responsibility for bailing out Thailand, without American or European help, in return for a commitment from the Thai Government to enact strict financial controls.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Lending money to Thailand prevented an economic collapse that would have been devastating to the world economy.

Negative Applications

1. Turning the Germany, Greece Bailout

While economists may argue that Germany’s bailout of Greece was necessary, many combat this ideology by claiming that the bailout did little or no good in improving Greece’s economy. First, Greece’s credit rating fell even lower than it did before. S&P cited “inability to lever debt” as the reason to downgrade their already dismal rating. Additionally, the loan increased Greece’s debt, a problem they struggled with in the first place. The bailout money was spent more on funding social programs, rather than bailing out Greece’s major banks. The Guardian News reported, “The International Monetary Fund has warned [Greece](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/greece) that it will have to step up the pace of its economic reforms in order to avoid derailing the efforts being made to cut its debt mountain. Underlining growing concern in Washington at the deteriorating state of Greece's public finances, the IMF's mission chief to Athens, Poul Thomsen, said the emergency bailout package pieced together in May 2010 was failing. ‘The view that seems to be taking hold is that the government program is not working,’ Thomsen told a conference in Athens on Wednesday. ‘The program will not remain on track without a determined reinvigoration of structural reforms in the coming months. Unless we see this invigoration, I think the program will run off track.’ In the financial markets, Thomsen's comments led to a fall in the value of the [euro](http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/euro) and an increase in the interest rate Greece has to pay to service its national debt, which has soared to 150% of annual output as the country faces the prospect of a third year of recession.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

2. Spanish Bailout

Another struggling member of the “PIIGS,” Spain’s economy has been in the dumpster for several years now. With a response similar to the Greek financial crisis, the Eurozone unanimously decided to fund a massive bailout of the Spanish banks. According to CNN, “The European Commission has approved Spain's plans to restructure four of its weakest banks, clearing the way for them to receive nearly €37 billion in fresh capital from the eurozone's bailout fund. All four banks were nationalized to prevent them collapsing after Spain's property bubble burst, leaving them facing massive losses on their loan books. The bailout should allow three lenders - BFA-Bankia, NCG Banco and Catalunya Banc -- to become viable in the long term without continued state support, the Commission said. Their balance sheets will be reduced by 60% by 2017. The fourth, Banco de Valencia, will be sold to CaixaBank and will cease to operate independently. ‘Our objective is to restore the viability of banks receiving aid so that they are able to function without public support in the future,’ said European Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia. ‘Restoring a healthier financial sector capable of financing the real economy is indispensable for economic recovery in Spain.’”[[49]](#footnote-49) Unfortunately, this bailout is the perfect example of a failure. Instead of restructuring, the Spanish bank simply switched around their reserve ratios. Unfortunately, the reserve ratios prevented any of the money to enter the supply. The bailout money simply sat in the reserves of the banks while the Spanish economy collapsed.

3. Argentina Bailout

The last bailout we will discuss is that of the Argentinian bailout. In 2000 and 2001, Argentina faced a financial crisis like they had never seen before. Deflating currency killed net exports, and taxes had to be raised to compensate. The high taxes hurt businesses and triggered a terrible recession. The IMF and World Bank, once again decided to take action to save the Argentinian economy. This failed miserably. According to Agence France-Presse, “Loans were extended again in 2001, and this time, lenders asked Argentina to slash pensions and government spending while raising taxes. The austere strategy provoked tens of thousands of angry protesters to hit the streets repeatedly. Despite the loans, the economic crisis was far from averted and the country defaulted on $81 billion in bonds in December 2001. Banks and the Argentine peso collapsed, and many middle-class Argentines fled abroad, their savings wiped out. In 2003, the IMF and Argentina agreed that the heavily indebted country would be asked to repay only the interest on its debt, and in March 2005, bondholders swallowed a restructuring of the defaulted debt. Argentina paid off a final $9.5 billion owed to the IMF in 2006, and on Sept. 2, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner promised to repay another $6.7 billion to the Paris Club of international creditors.”[[50]](#footnote-50) The downfall of the economy represented nothing more than wasted money on a weak economy.

Conclusion

So, after almost ten pages of heavy analysis what have we learned? We’ve first learned how to properly distinguish between the two heavily conflicting ideologies of Austrian and Keynesian economics. We’ve examined the exact principles that create macroeconomic policy. Lastly, we’ve looked at applications of bailouts that both the affirmative and negative can use to support either side of the resolution. While the Berlin airlift bailout came in the form of physical food, economics might as well represent the same kind of vitals. Remember, there is no principle of economics that is 100% correct, only ones that tend to be more correct than others. Always consider all options while discussing economics, and always try to be objective. Fortunately, after reading this article, you are now armed with knowledge that you can use to bail yourself out in a debate round without having to rely on a third party to do so.

Section 2: Cases

Digging Deeper with Key Concepts Transformed into Solid, Usable Cases

Debating LD in This Year’s Resolution

In making a speech one must study three points:

first, the means of producing persuasion;

second, the language;

third the proper arrangement

of the various parts of the speech.

~ Aristotle

Affirmative

**A Chance to Really Live**

by Caleb DeLon

**The Worth of All Men**

by Blaire Bayliss

**Save Me**

by Michael Tcheau

Negative

**Do No Harm**

by Caleb Spencer

A Chance to Really Live

by Caleb DeLon

In the movie *Braveheart*, the valiant Scottish freedom fighter Sir William Wallace delivers the iconic line, “Every man dies. Not every man really lives.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Encapsulated in those eight words is the concept that you should not be content to simply exist, but should strain for a worthy goal, strive to make a difference in this world.

Unfortunately, for billions of people this concept is nothing but a dream. These billions of people lack basic needs such as food, water and shelter. Three billion people survive on less than $2.50 a day[[52]](#footnote-52), and 1.4 billion subsist on less than $1.25.[[53]](#footnote-53) Two and a half billion people live without even basic sanitation.[[54]](#footnote-54) A child dies every twenty seconds as a result of poor sanitation.[[55]](#footnote-55) A child dies every *five* seconds due to starvation.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Because these billions of people deserve not just a chance to exist, but a chance to really live, I stand most emphatically “Resolved: That governments have a moral obligation to assist other nations in need.”

For clarity in today’s debate, a few foundational definitions are necessary, starting with:

* Government: “the governing body of a nation, state, or community”[[57]](#footnote-57) (Oxford Dictionaries)
* Moral Obligation: “something that you must do for moral reasons”[[58]](#footnote-58),[[59]](#footnote-59),[[60]](#footnote-60) (Macmillan Dictionary)
* Assist: “to give support or aid to; help”[[61]](#footnote-61) (The Random House Dictionary)
* Nation: “an aggregation of people or peoples of one or more cultures, races, etc., organized into a single state”[[62]](#footnote-62) (World English Dictionary)
* Need: “[To] require (something) because it is essential or very important rather than just desirable”[[63]](#footnote-63) (Oxford Dictionaries)

Let’s move on to analyze my overarching position.

Lincoln-Douglas debate is about overarching principles, and I need to introduce an overarching principle here for clarity’s sake—hopefully, one we can all agree on. This principle is known in debate jargon as a “meta-framework”, so you can tag my **Meta-Framework** as ***Governments Fail***.

The point here is that governments can fail to meet perfectly valid moral obligations. The negative will probably bring up examples where international assistance went wrong. I agree that governmental assistance can fail, but that does *not* mean the government was not obligated to assist. Look at it this way: I have the moral obligation to be kind to my family. Am I always kind? Of course! … Okay, fine. I often fail to uphold my obligation. However, my failure does not invalidate the obligation! In the same way, the reality that governments fail should not lead us to conclude that governments have no obligations. Governments fail, but obligations can still exist.

So what is the standard for moral obligations? How do we know when one exists? The **standard** or **value** I propose is the **Preservation of Life**—that is to say, governments have a moral obligation to preserve life.

You should use my value as the standard for two reasons, which you can tag as **value links**.

Value Link 1: [Preserving Life is a] Universal Obligation

My point is simple: It is immoral to sit back and watch people die. When we have the opportunity to preserve life, *we must act*. The action can be big or small—what matters is that we do in fact take action.

Value Link 2: [Preserving Life is the] Foremost Obligation

Caring for lesser needs, such as safety and comfort, while ignoring the preservation of life, is utterly hypocritical. In any discussion of obligations, the obligation to preserve life must be at the forefront.

[Pause to transition to criterion.]

In what practical ways are governments obligated to preserve life? There are dozens of methods of preserving life, but I’d like to focus in on one: the governmental obligation to preserve life through the **criterion**, or **method**, of the **Provision of Basic Needs**. Basic needs are operationally defined as “food, water, and shelter.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

You should accept this method as the way to uphold the standard of the Preservation of Life for two reasons, which you can tag as **criterion links**.

Criterion Link 1: *Area of Need*

As the statistics in my introduction demonstrated, millions of people around the world need their basic needs provided for. The numbers are staggering.

Seven hundred and ninety million people are chronically undernourished.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Over one billion people have inadequate access to water.[[66]](#footnote-66)

One billion four hundred million don’t have adequate shelter.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Billions of people around the world need the provision of basic needs.

Criterion Link 2: Area of Opportunity

My application is **Food Waste.** Live Science reported in 2009 that Americans toss out 40 percent of their food. That’s 150 trillion calories wasted every year[[68]](#footnote-68) - enough to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of starving kids.[[69]](#footnote-69)

This is an area of opportunity. We can make a difference and preserve life by providing basic needs to desperately needy people.

Criterion Link 3: *Low-Risk Area*

Providing basic needs is not complicated, inefficient, or dangerous. It doesn’t require intricate systems, it certainly isn’t a waste of resources, and it doesn’t risk lives. For just 1/35 of annual worldwide military spending, every individual in a developing country could have access to basic health, nutrition, water, and sanitation.[[70]](#footnote-70),[[71]](#footnote-71)

In summary, by preserving life through the provision of basic needs, governments can ensure that people around the world not only exist and die, but have the chance to *really live*.

Addendum for Affirmative Case “A Chance to Really Live”

by Caleb DeLon

1. As you’ve probably noticed, this case does not have contentions. For many case types, contentions aren’t necessary. All the information that is normally in contentions is contained within the value and criterion links. For more information on links, see Travis Herche’s article on “How to Defend Your Value.”

2. Always keep the meta-framework in mind. When the Negative brings up examples, you don’t have to refute them. If you can, that’s great—but if the Negative analysis is accurate, simply cross-apply your meta-framework against the example. That’s all the refutation you need!

3. The criterion serves to narrow the round, in a sense. An Affirmative running this case does not have to prove that governments are obligated to provide military aid, economic aid, etc. On the contrary, those areas should be avoided. In fact, the Affirmative does not even have to support military intervention to preserve life! The Affirmative can simply say, “Governments may have other moral obligations, including military intervention. However, in this round I have already proved the resolution true by demonstrating that governments have the moral obligation to preserve life *through the provision of basic needs*.” The resolution is proved true if the Affirmative can establish just one obligation.

Negative Brief against Aff Case “A Chance to Really Live”

by Caleb DeLon

Meta-Framework:

Most Negatives will want to accept this meta-framework. You probably don’t want to argue that if a government failed, it never had an obligation to act. But be warned—if you do accept the meta-framework, you cannot simply argue that international assistance sometimes had bad results. You will need a solid thesis statement that actually shows *why* governments do not have the obligation to assist.

However, if you are running Efficiency as your standard, you cannot accept the meta-framework! The entire premise of an Efficiency Negative is antithetical to the meta-framework’s main argument. An Efficiency Negative argues that in order for a government to have a moral obligation, it must carry out its actions effectively. For more on how to use Efficiency as a standard, see my article.

Value:

It’s pretty hard to argue against the Preservation of Life as a value. You may very well be able to accept the Preservation of Life as part of a dual value—that way, any proposed obligation must attempt to further both the Preservation of Life and your standard. You’ve just doubled the Affirmative’s job, while appearing very reasonable and also decreasing the likelihood that the Affirmative will attack your standard. The approach you take will really depend on the value you choose to run as Negative. But whatever value you choose, the path to defeating this value runs straight to the value links.

Value Link 1:

The point that is subtly being made here is that the government, not just the people, has the obligation to preserve life. The link uses “we” throughout, but the logic is intended to apply to the government as well. I would recommend arguing that the government has the duty to preserve life, yes—but only the life of its own citizens. A government that protects its citizens is moral—anything more is a bonus.

Value Link 2:

Is preserving life really foremost? What if the preservation of life harms national security, and thus endangers life at home? What if governments need to focus their resources on their own country? Questions like these can undermine this value link.

Criterion:

If you defeat the meta-framework and/or the value, you don’t need to spend much time on the criterion.

As I said in the Affirmative addendum, this criterion functions as a burden-reducer of sorts by narrowing the round. With this criterion, the Affirmative only has to prove that governments have the obligation to preserve life *through the provision of basic needs*. This burden-reduction is valid, but not unassailable. If preserving life is the standard, why doesn’t the government have the obligation to use any and all means to uphold that standard? Why does the government only have to preserve life in this one area? Bringing topics such as military aid (for the purpose of preserving life) into the discussion can decrease the appeal of the Affirmative position. You still have to show that the government doesn’t have to provide basic needs either, but now the Affirmative has more ground to defend.

Criterion Link 1:

This is an obvious point that doesn’t harm you. Accept it and move on.

Criterion Link 2:

If you’re running an Efficiency Negative, you can ask the question, “How?” It’s nice to say that help is needed, but if the government doesn’t have a practical and efficient way to assist it doesn’t have an obligation at all.

If you’re not running an Efficiency Negative, then make the point that WE can help, and that WE have the obligation to help. However, the government is not obligated to help because [insert thesis here].

Criterion Link 3:

Whether an action is high-risk or low-risk is utterly irrelevant to whether it is an obligation. This is not an obligation because [insert thesis here, again].

The Worth of All Men

By Blaire Bayliss

“The essence of our effort to see that every child has a chance must be to assure each an equal opportunity, not to become equal, but to become different - to realize whatever unique potential of body, mind and spirit he or she possesses” -John Fischer[[72]](#footnote-72)

These words illustrate the concept that regardless of race, status or nationality, every man was created equal. Every man possesses a unique body, spirit and mind that is of unquestionable value- regardless of the state lines surrounding that individual. All men were created equal, and as such, have intrinsic and inherent worth. It is because I believe in the worth of all men that I affirm the resolution and stand **Resolved:** governments have a moral obligation to assist other nations in need.

For clarity in today’s debate round, let’s first define a few of the terms used in the resolution:

**Moral Obligation:** an obligation arising out of considerations of right and wrong; the social force that binds you to the courses of action demanded by that force.[[73]](#footnote-73)

**Assist:** to give usually supplementary support or aid to.[[74]](#footnote-74)

**Need:** a condition requiring supply or relief.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The highest value in today’s debate round, the thing that must be recognized by government, is **Justice**. The giving of each his due is a fundamental purpose and moral obligation of government. Let’s take a look at this further in:

Contention 1: Governments Must Uphold Justice

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy has this to say about justice, “The responsibility people have to treat individuals and groups they affect in a morally appropriate and, in particular, even-handed way has hence a certain priority over their moral duty to turn circumstances into just ones through some kind of equalization. Establishing justice of circumstances (ubiquitously and simultaneously) is beyond any given individual's capacities. Hence one has to rely on collective actions. In order to meet this moral duty, a basic order guaranteeing just circumstances must be justly created. This is an essential argument of justice in favor of establishing social institutions and fundamental state structures for political communities; with the help of such institutions and structures, individuals can collectively fulfill their responsibility in the best possible manner.”[[76]](#footnote-76)

Societies build upon the assumption that each man will be given what is his due. If criminals are left to wander the streets, and innocent men must worry that they will be wrongly convicted and sentenced, then civilization cannot exist. That’s why political philosopher John Rawls believed that very purpose of government was to provide justice to its people. He considered justice to be the fundamental purpose and moral obligation of government.[[77]](#footnote-77) Governments have a moral obligation to uphold Justice for all. We’ll examine this further in:

Contention 2: All Are Created Equal

In 1994, just before the Rwandan genocide, a unit of peacekeepers from the United Nations was sent to stabilize Rwanda. This unit was perfectly equipped, ready and willing to help the people of Rwanda.[[78]](#footnote-78) Although at first they were able to do some good in the country, they were eventually useless. When the government of Rwanda began to engage in the act of genocide, United Nations peacekeepers were unable to help. Because they lacked the authority to act in that specific scenario, peacekeepers were forced to watch as innocent civilians were murdered, doing nothing to help until the Security Council gave them permission.[[79]](#footnote-79)

At hearing of this event, the international community was shocked. How could a group of individuals charged with protecting civilians stand by and watch the Rwandan government slaughter them? The cold truth is that UN peacekeepers were forced to focus more on state lines and procedure than on the people they were supposed to protect.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy clearly states, “Equality in its prescriptive usage has, of course, a close connection with morality and justice in general and distributive justice in particular. From antiquity onward, equality has been considered a constitutive feature of justice.”[[80]](#footnote-80)

In order to truly uphold justice, a government must realize that all people are equal- regardless of state lines or nationality. A government’s moral obligation is to pursue justice for all, regardless of state lines.

Contention Three: Governments are Morally Obligated to Assist

Last year, the Arab Spring saw uprising in many Middle Eastern countries. The uprising in Libya was one of the bloodiest. With so many slain and so many unnecessary deaths, the international community established a no-fly zone over Libya. This no-fly zone prevented shipments of arms, weapons, or any military aircraft, while still attempting to allow medical supplies and humanitarian relief into Libya. This no-fly zone, cost governments next to nothing, and still managed to have a huge effect on Libya, significantly reducing the loss of human life.[[81]](#footnote-81)

The resolution asks us whether or not governments have a moral obligation to assist nations in need. When governments have the ability to assist other nations, should they? When the government has the chance to promote justice and security worldwide, should they take that chance? Is the government morally obligated to do what it can for humanity?

If we say that governments are only responsible to their own people, then we are in truth no better than the peacekeepers who watched as innocent people were killed. We’re saying that a government that has the ability to help people has the moral right to turn its back. We are saying that justice is secondary to state lines, the imaginary concept of territory can justify travesty, and that it is in no way morally wrong for a system to allow people to suffer.

It is because I believe that government has a moral obligation to uphold justice for all that I stand **Resolved:** government has a moral obligation to assist other nations in need.

Negative Brief against Aff Case “The Worth of All Men”

by Blaire Bayliss

This case has one major weakness: the value of Justice. The case states that justice is good and must be achieved. It uses the basic definition of justice, which is the giving of each his due. The basic assumption of this case is that in order to achieve justice, a government must help absolutely every person in the world. However, some would disagree. In The Law, French philosopher Frederic Bastiat outlines the concept of legal plunder. Bastiat believed that to take money from one person and give it to another in the form of taxation was a barely legitimized version of outright theft, and a violation of justice. If taxpaying citizens give up their money to the government and the government gives that money away to citizens of other nations which do not pay taxes, Bastiat would see that as a form of theft. Essentially government assistance to other nations in need could be seen as theft- a violation of justice. As such, the affirmative side cannot achieve their value, and should lose the round. This is a huge weak spot in the affirmative case.

The affirmative case promotes the concept of global justice- the idea that justice knows no state lines. It’s important to note that most philosophers do not defend global justice only in situations of genocide or starvation. Rather, they applied it in every situation. The affirmative mindset of global justice is what led to the movement promoting a World Government. Many philosophers saw that if you followed this line of reasoning, the logical conclusion was that here should be only one government. This World Government would be the embodiment of Hobbes’ Leviathan. This World Government would answer to no one, come into conflict with none, and would be free to truly promote the concept of Global Justice in whatever way it saw fit. The affirmative speaks of the abolition of state lines, and how justice knows no boundaries. Don’t be afraid to point out how radical this idea is, and what its logical conclusions are.

In the second contention, this affirmative case uses the example of UN peacekeepers in Rwanda. One thing to note here is that UN peacekeepers were already in Haiti. In truth, the international community had already placed peacekeepers within Rwanda to aid the civilian population in any non-violent way possible. In other words: the international community was already assisting a nation in need. The problem here was not that assistance was not being given, the problem was that assistance was not given quickly. Peacekeepers did not have authorization to include themselves in a violent conflict, and were legally obligated to remove themselves from the situation until they received more specific orders from the UN Security Council. It could be said that this example shows that if we do get involved in a situation, the authorization process should be able to respond to situations quickly. However, it does not necessarily affirm the resolution.[[82]](#footnote-82) Additionally, although this example sounds great, the affirmative has not actually proven anything with this example. The main argument here is that the world was ‘shocked’ when peacekeepers failed to assist. Does a ‘shock’ necessarily prove the existence of a moral obligation?

The example of a no-fly zone over Libya can be easily refuted. Currently, this example is being used in the affirmative case almost as context. The affirmative doesn’t use it to prove anything cold-turkey, or to make any definitive claims. It’s merely being used to show the judge what kind of need governments should act on and what kind of assistance governments should give. While you don’t want to minimize the protection of human life, you may want to point out some of the implementation of the no-fly zone over Libya was not cheap. In fact, the pentagon estimated that the no-fly zone cost $600 million, just for the first week.[[83]](#footnote-83) Additionally, while a no-fly zone may seem humanitarian, past studies have seen that no-fly zones can hamper humanitarian efforts, prevent civilians from fleeing the country and are almost impossible to actually enforce.[[84]](#footnote-84)

This case, like any others, has weaknesses. The trick to beating it is to find its weak spots, and attack them relentlessly. This case’s largest weak spot is that it avoids details, and centers round an idealistic big picture. To beat the case, harp on the details. Ask for numbers, bring up facts, point to statistics, and take the affirmative philosophy to its logical end. Point out the true vagueness in the affirmative case, and force the affirmative into a corner. Good luck!

Save Me

by Michael Tcheau

Families huddled together, trying to block out the sharp pangs of hunger. Mothers wrapped their children in their arms, comforting them as they cried. A father tries to boil his own hair and leather shoes to make a soup for his children while a mother considers cooking a disease-ridden rat. For the first time in modern history, an entire city was going to starve to death. Suddenly, a rumbling noise fills the sky. As the people look up, they see a sight that was too good to be true. Airplanes were dropping thousands of boxes on parachutes into the city. Inside the boxes, the people found food, water, medicine, and even chocolate. The Berlin Airlift saved over a million people from starvation. It is because humanity has a duty to care for each other through economic means, that I affirm the resolution, that governments have a moral obligation to assist other nations in need.

Before we go any deeper, some definitions are required.

**Moral** - Confirming to standards of what is right or just in behavior; virtuous. (*American Heritage Dictionary*)[[85]](#footnote-85)

**Assist** – To give support or aid. (*Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary)[[86]](#footnote-86)*

**Need** – A lack of something requisite for survival. (Derived from the word “Needy” from *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*)[[87]](#footnote-87)

Now, before we get any further, I’d like to present a:

Resolutional Analysis – Need is something required

The definition of the word “Need” ensures that the assistance must provide something that is required by a foreign nation to survive, not simply something desired. For instance, a government asking for increased teachers’ pensions constitutes a want, not so much a need, as the government and nation would most likely survive without increasing teacher’s pensions. However, if the nation requested military support, or economic aid for a dying banking system, a need is presented, as the nation requires something to remain sovereign and for its people to physically survive. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between a “need” and a “want.”

Having stated this, I’d like to move on to my **value of Justice**, defined operationally as “the condition and system by which laws are administered to protect the human rights of life, liberty, and property.” This is the highest value for the simple reason that it is the goal of governments. As Daniel Webster once said, “Justice is the greatest interest of man on earth, it is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together. Wherever her temple stands, and so long as it is duly honored, there is a foundation for general security, happiness, and the improvement and progress of our race.”[[88]](#footnote-88) Justice is indeed the greatest ethical standard.

However, Justice cannot simply be achieved without a stepping-stone. This bridge is my **criterion of Economic Stability**, defined operationally as “the state of having adequate monetary funding in order to maximize employment, consistently grow GDP, and ensure that every citizen can provide for his or her basic needs.”[[89]](#footnote-89) All three of these standards must be met in order for Economic Stability to be achieved. In order to show how economic stability promotes Justice, look to my criterion link.

Link 1: Economic Stability allows for Justice

Economic stability allows for justice, because it creates an environment in which people can advocate for human rights and other social issues. Few care about abortion rights, gun rights, or basic liberties when they struggle for survival. It is only when people are adequately fed or clothed, that they can afford to argue for social issues. Consider the application of fascist Italy under the reign of Mussolini. The starving people of Italy were so desperate to survive that they were willing to support a brutal dictator as long as he fed them. Without economic stability, people will gravitate to whoever promises them food.

Contention 1: Economic stability requires international government assistance

Economic stability requires government assistance for three reasons.

a. International support boosts GDP

International support boosts GDP by providing additional funding to bolster failing economies. Consider the example of the Thailand Bailout of 1997. The failing Thai economy had slashed production and obliterated GDP. With the Thai government on the brink of collapse, and unemployment at all-time highs, the IMF and World Bank decided something needed to be done. Using money collected from Japan and the US, Thailand was given a 16 billion dollar bailout package. This money was injected into the economy and bolstered the failing banks, increasing GDP. Today Thailand is ranked as the fourth most successful Asian economy.

b. International support lowers unemployment

International support lowers unemployment by providing a method for governments to rescue failing economies and restoring jobs. Consider the example of the Greek Bailout. Due to high interest rates and poor citizens, the Greek economy collapsed, and many businesses went bust. As a result, people lost jobs. The German government decided to assist Greece by providing a bailout package. This 173 billion euro bailout package helped stabilize the wildly fluctuating economy, and halted what would have most likely been the collapse of the Eurozone by increasing employment rates.

c. International support provides a social minimum

International support provides for a social minimum by feeding those who are starving. Do you remember the story of the Berlin Airlift? The US government came to the aid of the failing city by spending billions of dollars on parachuting food supplies into Germany. This bailout was directly responsible for saving the lives of over 1 million people.

It is because of the jobs, money, and lives saved by international assistance to failing economies, that the resolution is indeed true. Perhaps president Franklin D. Roosevelt once said it best, “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.”[[90]](#footnote-90)

Negative Brief against Aff Case “Save Me”

by Michael Tcheau

The Value (Justice)

This is a really strong value; most likely, it’s going to be similar to yours. If you don’t feel comfortable riding right up against this value, go ahead and mitigate (say it’s the same as yours). However, if you do feel like a challenge, here are a few responses.

1. Self-conflicts

In order to protect the rights of some people, governments must violate the rights of others. Consider the examples of forced quarantine (violates liberty), taxation (violates property rights), and drug restrictions (violates liberty and property rights).

2. Allows for Government Tyranny

The only government powerful enough to protect individual’s rights in every single circumstance, is also powerful enough to take away people’s rights in every single circumstance. See the application of Mussolini.

The Criterion (Economic Stability)

Have some fun taking this criterion down. It is strong, but carries some fundamental flaws. The strength lies in the criterion link. Be sure to refute this idea by showing examples of governments that are stable but where the majority still does not care about promoting liberty (see the US and France).

1. Amoral

An economically stable government does not necessarily protect liberty. China is a great response against this criterion.

2. Crushes individual rights

In the pursuit of economic stability, governments have committed hideous crimes. Do some research on the applications of Mugabe’s Zimbabwe and Athens’ destruction of Scione. In order to promote economic stability, redistribution of wealth was used, and a majority committed genocide.

3. Conflicts with justice

Use the previous two arguments to impact into the statement that economic stability harms justice.

The Applications of Thailand, Greece, and Berlin Airlift

The only application with true impact is the Berlin Airlift. Use these applications to turn against the criterion link. Greece and Thailand still have very questionable morals and do not necessarily support liberty. Respond to the Berlin Airlift by mitigation.

Do No Harm

by Caleb Spencer

In our legal system it is admirable for one to be a law abiding citizen; in fact everyone has the responsibility to obey the laws. But, let’s say that the legal system consisted of 15 specific laws, would it be admirable if someone obeyed 14 of them, but then broke the 15th? Aren’t they automatically considered a lawbreaker at that point? It’s not good enough to just keep some of the laws, or even the majority of the laws. No, to be a law abiding citizen we must obey all of the laws. Failure to keep one nullifies all of our good efforts to keep the others.

Our resolution in today’s debate round is similar in that there may be 15 different approaches that fit under the resolution on how we can assist another nation. Each one may be admirable in its own way. However, if there is an approach that would fit under the resolution and yet, harm another nation rather than assist it, then it would nullify the resolution just as breaking one law would nullify your status as a law abiding citizen.

DEFINITIONS

In order to have clarity in today’s debate round I offer the following definitions.

Assist – “To give help or support to”*[[91]](#footnote-91)*

Need – “A condition or situation in which something is required”*[[92]](#footnote-92)*

Nation - “A people who share common customs, origins, history, and frequently language; a nationality.”*[[93]](#footnote-93)*

Anti-value of Harm

In today’s debate round I will be proposing the anti-value of Harm. An anti-value is very simple; unlike a normal value, which is something we are trying to achieve, an anti-value is something we are attempting to prevent, and it is the ultimate goal of the round. With this year’s resolution there are a number of different values which can be argued with equal force. However, each of those values, in its own way, is attempting to alleviate suffering, that is, to prevent harm. So the over-arching value in our round today, regardless of the kind of good being proposed by the affirmative, is to ensure that the resolution does no harm.

So now that we have seen my value, let’s take a look at my 3 main contentions.

Contention 1. End Goal is Do No Harm

Hippocrates lived from 460 B.C. to 377 B.C. During his life, he wrote many things regarding the art of medicine. In one of these writings, Epidemics, he summed up the responsibility of the physician as to do good or to do no harm.[[94]](#footnote-94) Just as the doctor assists the patient with their physical needs, so this year’s resolution is concerned with assisting nations with their various needs. And just as the physician was bound to do no harm, the governments who give the assistance must be bound in this same way.

The resolution is so broad that we could debate about the many kinds of assistance we could give; military, economic, food aid, or disaster relief. The Resolution gives us no sense of direction when it comes to determining what a legitimate need is, or who decides it. But at the end of the day, regardless of the assistance being provided, all the aid must lead us to a point where we are helping not hurting, and where we are alleviating suffering not causing it. In other words, regardless of the good we are pursuing we must do no harm.

Contention 2. This Resolution can cause harm

There is currently a tragic conflict underway in the country of Syria, in which thousands of civilians are being killed by their own government with the assistance of Russia. In June of 2012, Russia was condemned by the International Community for defending the Syrian government by supplying attack helicopters. As late as November, Russia was printing Syrian money in Moscow, shipping it to Syria and then shipping helicopter parts to the embattled government, who would use the Russian printed Syrian pounds to pay for the equipment. The height of hypocrisy also came in November, when Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said that any foreign help to the opposition fighting President Bashar Assad’s government would represent a “gross violation” of basic principles of international law.

Now this is all very interesting, but you may be asking ‘what does it have to do with the resolution?’ As we already established, the over-arching value must be that of ‘do no harm’. But is this an example of an action that causes harm, and yet is justified under the resolution? Let’s examine it from the Russian’s perspective. From Moscow’s vantage point, they believe they have a moral obligation to assist their ally, Syria, in its time of need, regardless of the fact that the government has defined this need as the killing of its own people. While it may seem strange, affirming the resolution, as written, in essence, affirms the actions of Russia with regard to the Syrian conflict.

Contention 3: Negating the resolution prevents harm

While it is an admirable goal to assist people in need, there are many things to consider when doing this, not the least of which is to ensure that your assistance is actually a help and not a harm. This is true regardless of whether we are arguing for governments to do this or individuals. Whether we are arguing that it is something that should be done or must be done. Unfortunately, this year’s resolution, as written, cannot ensure this basic requirement. Because there are no limits or direction within the resolution’s text, its application is wide open. And as we saw in our second contention, clearly there are some actions which can fit under the resolution but which are harmful. This leaves us with only one alternative to avoid the dangers implicit in the resolution, and that alternative is to negate it. By negating the resolution, we prevent the unintended consequence of affirming a harmful action such as Russia’s assistance in killing the citizens of Syria.

Affirmative Brief Against Negative Case “Do No Harm”

by Caleb Spencer

Anti-value: Harm

Agree preventing harm is a good thing, but make the point that everything causes harm to someone or something in one way or another. If we wait for something in which no harm is possible we’ll wait forever and effectively do nothing.

Definitions:

Contest all the definitions, they are too broad, and you need to limit the resolution through your definitions to what you are specifically focusing on.

Contention 1: End Goal is do No Harm

The end goal is to assist other nations, not to prevent harm. Preventing harm may be a part of the resolution, but that is not the end goal.

Contention 2: This Resolution Can Cause Harm

Yes, agree that there is potential for harm, but everything we do as humans has the same potential.

Syria- This example can be eliminated by looking at the definitions for a nation, and arguing that the rebels are the nation as well as the government. So Russia isn’t really helping the whole nation, just one faction of it.

Contention 3: Negating the resolution prevents harm

Agree that assisting is good and argue that the aff case is setting limits and giving direction to the resolution in a way that will be beneficial and not harmful.

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