



LD March/April 2014 Aff Analysis

The current resolution, **Resolved: Placing political conditions on humanitarian aid to foreign countries is unjust**, asks debaters to weigh a difficult ethical quandary. Is it unjustified to condition much-needed aid to citizens of foreign nations on political reforms by their government? Today, we're going to take a look at the affirmative side of this debate.

We'll start out with an investigation of some key terms.

First, what are **political conditions**? Put simply, conditions are requirements a recipient must meet before receiving aid. "Political" conditions are requirements of a political nature. They might be anything from changes in laws or their enforcement, to economic reforms, to regime change. Most political conditions will involve standards of good governance and adherence to human rights standards, but they could take the form of demanding just about any political change.

Here is **evidence**:

*(Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC Glossary, "political conditionality,"
http://www.deza.admin.ch/glossary_popup.php?itemID=18852&langID=1,
Translated from "Un seul monde", No 1/0, accessed 2/26/14)*

Political conditionality In connection with development aid, conditionality means that aid is tied to certain conditions. In 1998 the Federal Council decided "that it retains the right to break off cooperation with a country for political reasons when the latter seriously violates human rights".



This also means that political conditionality affects all Swiss foreign relations (economic, scientific, cultural, trade, military, etc.). The main criteria which are applied in a specific situation and to the behavior of other countries are failure to make efforts to achieve good governance, e.g. the deliberate and consistent blocking of reform-oriented measures; serious violations of human rights, in particular grave discrimination of minorities; the interruption or revoking of democratization processes; serious infringements against peace and security (war, warmongering, state terror); reluctance to accept the right of return of nationals (refugees).

Conditions are not just incentives, they are binding. Therefore, if a recipient state fails to meet the political conditions, they lose the aid. This means we have to consider the possibility that a state may choose to forfeit humanitarian aid due to their refusal to meet the political conditions. So, “is humanitarian assistance or achieving political priorities more important?” is a key question in this debate.

Next, what exactly is **humanitarian aid**? It is assistance (either money, manpower, or supplies) designed to save lives, reduce suffering, and uphold respect for human rights. Humanitarian aid generally comes in response to some kind of crisis, be it a war or a natural disaster. It is distinct from “development assistance,” which is designed to grow a nation’s economy in the long-term, and is not in response to any particular emergency.



Here is definition **evidence**:

(Humanitarian Innovation Fund, grant-making fund to support organisations working in countries and regions facing humanitarian challenges, partnership between ELRHA (Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance) and ALNAP (The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action) hosted by Save the Children UK, accessed 2/26/2014)

"Humanitarian aid' is aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies."

This definition for humanitarian aid is taken from Global Humanitarian Assistance. The definition excludes any long term development assistance. The definition provides some useful examples of traditional responses to humanitarian crises:

Material relief assistance and services (shelter, water, medicines etc.);

Emergency food aid (short-term distribution and supplementary feeding programmes);

Relief coordination, protection and support services (coordination, logistics and communications).

Reconstruction relief and rehabilitation (repairing pre-existing infrastructure as opposed to longer-term activities designed to improve the level of infrastructure;

Disaster prevention and preparedness (disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, contingency stocks and planning).

Another important thing to note about this resolution is the **diversity of actors involved**. You may notice that the topic does not specify the United States, or any other actor. There are a huge number of entities that distribute humanitarian aid. Some aid money goes directly from one government to another, such as the United States federal government giving aid to Afghanistan. There are also a vast array of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities that dole out aid. Finally, international



organizations (such as the U.N.) might be involved. As you are debating, it is important to stay aware of the different challenges and priorities that might come along with each of these different types of actors. Don't forget to interrogate both your opponents' evidence and your own to determine exactly what actors each card is referring to.

Relatedly, it is valuable to keep in mind that aid can take a variety of forms. Some types of humanitarian aid might go directly to citizens, such as programs that administer vaccines or directly distribute food. Others might require an intermediary from the government of the recipient nation. The government then doles out the resource to the people. So, again, it is important to consider the circumstances involved in various situations as you debate.

Now that we know what we're debating, let's look at some possible **values and criterions** for this topic.

It should be obvious that most affirmatives will use "**justice**" as their value. By this point in your LD career, you are probably an old pro at debating about justice. Just in case you're not, we'll go over some possibilities. You may want to use John Rawl's [Theory of Justice](#) or Immanuel Kant's [categorical imperative](#) to inform your value/criterion structure. Other criteria you might want to consider are "upholding human rights," "upholding international law," or "self-determination."

It is also possible to use utilitarianism, if you can win that conditioning aid is bad for utility outcomes, but I don't think that is your most strategic option. It is likely that many negatives on this topic will select util as their criterion. Even if you have great evidence on the question of "conditions create bad outcomes," it is still usually better to diversify your strategic options by having a separate criterion in your aff case.

Another good option is discussing the concept of [ethics of care](#), which focuses on relationships and power dynamics in interactions between entities. It argues that interactions in which a strong actor



coerces a weaker actor are always abusive, even if they maximize utility. This is obviously a useful way for the affirmative to frame the debate.

Here's **evidence**:

(Tove Petterson, Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas @ University of Oslo, "The Ethics of Care: Normative Structures and Empirical Implications," Health Care Anal., 19(1): 51–64, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3037474/>, March 2011)

One characteristic feature of the ethics of care, and also a reason for its swift growth and applicability, is its relational ontology. The ethics of care depicts the moral agent not primarily in terms of independence, equality of power and influence, enjoying almost unrestricted freedom to enter and dissolve contracts. Rather, it conceives agents as mutually interconnected, vulnerable and dependent, often in asymmetric ways. This approach lets us visualize the moral agent as a "mother–child-dyad", for example, instead of the "autonomous-man-model", coined by among others Sarah Ruddich [27] and Virginia Held [11]. The conception's transformation took place within the sub-discipline of meta-ethics, but its implications have spread much further afield. What makes this particular model of the moral agent useful as a wider behavioral metaphor for ethicists is its capacity to capture significant features of man's interaction in general, such as reciprocity, dependency, connectedness and asymmetry. These features are present, to various degrees, in all types of relationships and interaction, not only in what we call intimate relationships. And while this conceptualization does indeed have room for important features of intimate and private relationships, easily overlooked by the "autonomous-man-model", it extends to moral agents outside the private domain—at work, and in the social and global arena as demonstrated by among others Joan Tronto [30] and Virginia Held [11–13]. For instance, instead of depicting nations as sovereign, self-sufficient and equal in strength, one can envisaging them as relational, mutually dependent, but often unequal in power and resources. The relational model allows also for a wider understanding of who the moral agents are: they are not only individuals but also groups, institutions and nations. Consequently, it manages to capture interaction between groups, as well as interaction between groups, institutions and individuals. Relationships transcend boundaries separating the private from the public, the



individual from the collective. These “inter-category” relations differ, sometimes quite significantly, from relations within categories, such as between friends, independent citizens or equally powerful states. These mixed relations are embedded in everyday life, and are frequently weighted in favor of one side. Involvement is often involuntary and sometimes coerced; access to power and resources is uneven, as is vulnerability to abuse. In asymmetric relationships, the dominant figure may have almost total power over the other’s life and prospects.¹ People’s relationships extend in all directions. Some will engender care, others will stifle its growth and give way to conflict, abuse and violence. Care ethicists should therefore study all kinds of relationships, not only private and professional. As the ethics of care accentuates different features than other theories, e.g., harm caused by lack of care, the agents’ vulnerability and dependency, and how they are situated in particular power- and resource situations, it also identifies certain ethical challenges other theories tend to neglect. For instance, the ethics of care is as a result of its focus on interactions, alert to structural violence, i.e. to injuries caused by the way society is organized.² Structural violence infects relationships between institutions and individuals, and is characterized precisely by lack of care between unequal parties, such as the global corporation vis-à-vis the individual. Such harm can be inflicted slowly and might not be immediately apparent. It can take place even if rights are not violated, and the overall good is maximized. When the dominant party (which might be a global corporation or a health authority) forces the less empowered party (who might be a child or health worker) to acquiesce to or subject themselves (or others) to harmful schemes, the relationship counts as abusive. Disempowerment can cause conflict—at the level of the individual and family as well as of the state.

Once you choose and justify a strong value/criterion, you’ll need to craft some arguments to support your case. One possible argument is that **conditionality flies in the face of the concept of humanitarianism**, and threatens the entire humanitarian system by corrupting its foundational principles.



Here is **evidence** on that:

(Thorsten Volberg, Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Assistance @ Ruhr-University of Bochum, "The politicization of humanitarian aid and its effect on the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality," Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict, <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/politicizationofaid.pdf>, 2006)

Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable in the population, such as children, women and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected. • Impartiality: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Relief of the suffering must be guided solely by needs and priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress. • Neutrality: Humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature (McHugh, 2006: 25).

More **evidence**:

(Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), a report generated by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, "Terms of Engagement: Conditions and Conditionality in Humanitarian Action," Eds. Nicholas Leader & Joanna Macrae, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/303.pdf>, July 2000)

All donors present re-affirmed that need, i.e. impartiality, should be the sole criteria for funding, but accepted that there was in reality political pressure on resource allocation. It was argued that donors are not just chequebooks and that they too should be bound by an active concern for principles and should not fund if they consider work to be ineffective and unprincipled. But it was also emphasised that donors should respect the independence of agencies as this is a key



element of the humanitarian system in that it enables them to respond to need alone, free from political pressure. It was also argued that the humanitarian idea was in fact quite fragile and that its long-term survival requires that donor governments do not attempt to use it for short-term political goals. It was suggested that one way of ensuring this was to reinforce legislation in donor countries requiring humanitarian funding to be impartial. It was also suggested that donors review the experience of bodies such as the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) and the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB) which have developed in an ad hoc way. It was also suggested that adherence to humanitarian criteria be included in the DAC process. In addition, it was suggested that donors and foreign policy actors needed to understand humanitarian principles better, and that humanitarian agencies had a role to play in pointing out the humanitarian consequences of certain courses of action.

Another good argument for the affirmative is that **conditions fail and reduce the effectiveness of aid**. There are a number of strong internal links to this argument. One is that politicized aid is distrusted by local populations, complicating aid mission.

Evidence:

(Thorsten Volberg, Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Assistance @ Ruhr-University of Bochum, "The politicization of humanitarian aid and its effect on the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality," Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict, <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/politicizationofaid.pdf>, 2006)

One of the difficulties to integrate humanitarian action within international politics is that relief organizations reflect the cultural, religious and political values of the societies and communities of which they are part of, even if they are neutral, impartial and 'non-governmental' (Macrae, 2003a: 1). This puts NGOs at risk of being intimately associated with the powers and forces that many in the recipient state might see as the actual cause of their rather humiliating position; making for rather difficult circumstances for agencies to work in, especially in environments where international humanitarianism is mainly seen as funded by a "small club of Western



donors”, making it just “the latest in a series of impositions of alien values, practices, and lifestyles” (Donini, 2004: 193). 23

Another is that conditions are difficult to monitor and enforce, as well as the possibility that hostile recipient states may simply refuse much-needed aid rather than make concessions.

Here is **evidence** on that point:

(Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), a report generated by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, “Terms of Engagement: Conditions and Conditionality in Humanitarian Action,” Eds. Nicholas Leader & Joanna Macrae, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/303.pdf>, July 2000)

As aid has become the predominant mode of intervention in ‘un-strategic’ conflicts, naturally conditionality has been turned to as a tool of intervention in these countries as well. There are however, significant contextual and ethical issues that make the use of conditionality in conflict problematic. In one sense, the essence of humanitarianism is its unconditionality, its response is to need alone regardless of any other criteria; selectivity is not an option for humanitarian action. Both ethically and practically, this is part of the deal, it is part of what guarantees the ‘harmlessness’ of humanitarian action. In another sense, humanitarian action has in fact always been conditional; it assumes the existence of the ‘deal’ as this lays out the conditions necessary for humanitarian action to be undertaken. When humanitarian agencies reduce or withdraw in response to the absence of these conditions, resumption in effect becomes conditional on the authorities re-establishing the conditions necessary for humanitarian work. Often this is security, but by no means always, as with the MoU discussions in South Sudan and the access of women to hospitals in Afghanistan. This might be called implicit humanitarian conditionality (‘we will only work if, and where the conditions exist for us to do so’). This however must be contrasted with the explicit political conditionality of donor governments who attempt to lever



specific policy, or even regime, changes. Though both may be forms of conditionality, the goals are very different. However, few, if any, of the conditions listed above as necessary for the success of conditionality are likely to exist in conflict, this makes its use as a policy tool problematic: The expanded role of aid as a conflict management tool, and the demand for coherence in response, has served to blur the distinction between implicit humanitarian conditionality and explicit political conditionality which seeks to use resources to promote peace agreements, human rights or donor foreign policy. A good example is the explicit use of conditionality by WFP in Afghanistan in order to promote women's rights. The blurring of humanitarian and political conditionality is probably unhelpful. As in development, conditionality causes resentment and is seen for what it is, interference. To the extent that humanitarian actors are tarred with this brush it tends to undermine already fragile perceptions of their impartiality and neutrality. In negotiating terms, there is also a subtle but important distinction to be made between the implicit humanitarian conditionality of withdrawing until such time as conditions are suitable to return, and making explicit demands on the authorities for certain political actions. The latter involves laying out and monitoring adherence to specific benchmarks, a complicated and cumbersome process that tends to end up in 'lines being drawn in the sand by everyone all over the place'.¹⁴ This distinction is increasingly being lost. There is mounting evidence that conditionality is simply ineffective as a lever for promoting policy change by the belligerents.¹⁵ It assumes a very aidcentric view of conflict and reveals a misunderstanding of conflict dynamics, tending to overestimate the importance of aid to the decisionmaking of belligerents.¹⁶ In practice it is also very hard to operate. One of the key criteria for success is donor coordination and 'credibility' (i.e. that the threat will be carried through) and this is not often a feature of the humanitarian system; there are many pressures on individual donors and agencies to deliver resources. Moreover, the theoretical life-saving/life-sustaining distinction, with conditionality applied to the latter, has proved extremely problematic to implement in practice.¹⁷

A third warrant is that politicized aid trades off with more sophisticated forms of political involvement. According to this argument, powerful nations choose to coerce needy recipients with conditional aid in nations that are not seen as strategically important enough to warrant more meaningful political investments. This not only fails to achieve success, but also functions as "fig leaf" for powerful states' failure to create significant political engagements with recipient nations.



Here's **evidence**:

(Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), a report generated by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, "Terms of Engagement: Conditions and Conditionality in Humanitarian Action," Eds. Nicholas Leader & Joanna Macrae, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/303.pdf>, July 2000)

However, despite the universalism at the core of the human rights ideology used to justify much of this intervention, there is in fact, a massive inconsistency in terms of response. The political, military and economic investment that powerful states have made in dealing with, for example, Kosovo dwarfs that which is devoted to, for example, Sudan and Angola. In these 'un-strategic' countries, the breaking down of the broader aid-politics barriers, the mono-ethics of rights and democracy, and the accepted wisdom that 'no aid is neutral' have combined to make aid not a substitute for policy, but the primary vehicle for intervention, if only by default. This central role of aid, (and so aid agencies), has produced serious strains, particularly on the principles and objectives by which such aid should be, or not be, disbursed. Thus the current debates around principles. In these 'un-strategic' conflicts we are thus confronted with a puzzle. Aid disbursement, or its withholding in the form of conditionality – probably the least sophisticated political tool in the toolbox of international relations – has become the prime intervention in precisely those places where political action is needed most. Precisely where humanitarianism is least likely to be accepted, in places where the belligerents have no need of it, it is most exposed. It seems that the lesson of the Rwanda evaluation – that humanitarian action cannot substitute for political action – has ended up legitimising the politicisation of aid rather than, as intended, spurring greater investment in political machinery. Not surprisingly, this approach has not worked. Indeed, it has resulted in what can only be described as a catastrophic failure of international responsibility to the citizens of these failed states, reflected in appalling levels of child mortality, life expectancy and other indicators. The international community has sent a sheep to confront wolves. And then blamed the sheep for allowing itself to fatten up the wolves.



Here is a generic piece of **evidence** that says conditions on aid are ethically and practically inappropriate:

(Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), a report generated by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, "Terms of Engagement: Conditions and Conditionality in Humanitarian Action," Eds. Nicholas Leader & Joanna Macrae, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/303.pdf>, July 2000)

There was however, consensus that conditionality should not be applied to humanitarian action; that it is both ethically and practically inappropriate. Ethically it runs counter to the very nature of humanitarianism. Practically it is unlikely to have much impact on belligerents anyway, owing to the small role that aid plays in their decision-making. However, there was also consensus that there are grey areas that need careful treatment. For example there is a subtle difference between withdrawing because conditions are no longer right for humanitarian action, and setting demands or conditions on the authorities for re-starting work. The latter can result in, in effect, 'handing over the keys' for restarting work to the belligerents. A second grey area is a result of the blurring of humanitarian and political boundaries, where the example of demanding equal access on the basis of gender for instance could be seen as political or humanitarian. There is also an unclear boundary between humanitarian aid and rehabilitation and development, where political conditionality is more acceptable. Whatever the form of conditionality, it was pointed out that those who impose it should be accountable for its consequences.

All of these arguments will be particularly useful against neg cases based on utilitarianism and the idea that conditioned aid can achieve desirable political outcomes. If you can win that conditions lead to worse outcomes, you will be well on your way to winning the debate.



Here is yet another great piece of **evidence** on that question:

(Edward E. Sampson, Center for Critical Studies @ Berkeley, "Unconditional Kindness to Strangers: Human Sociality and the Foundation for an Ethical Psychology," Theory & Psychology, Sage Publications, Vol. 13(2): 147–175, 2003)

Even staunch relational theorists encounter similar problems in their analyses of the importance of social support for both mental and physical health (e.g. Reiss et al., 2000). How can support be effective, however, if the person in need of such support is aware of its conditional quality? Indeed, support given conditionally may contribute more to the stressful aspects of human relations than to their healthful possibilities. On the other hand, support that is given unconditionally, that clearly says, 'I will be there for you no matter what,' may very well be the key to the frequently found positive correlation between social support and health. It also seems likely that the conditionality of relationships may actually thwart rather than facilitate the survival of human communities and in the long run undo rather than achieve individual well-being. Contractual relationships tend to be built around issues of power and fear (e.g. benefits given by the powerful to the less powerful may be withdrawn at any time) more than trust, and so provide a flimsy basis for building human communities and achieving individual well-being.

A strong affirmative case is likely to contain two key arguments: first, that conditional aid is unjust according to the affirmative's value/criterion, and second, that conditioned aid fails to achieve its intended outcomes. If you have some form of both of these pieces, you should be in great shape.

Of course, there are plenty of arguments you could make that are not covered here. This is meant to be a simple introduction to the topic to get you primed. Do not make the mistake of assuming there aren't a tremendous amount of other interesting avenues you might want to pursue. Debate is best when you get creative!



Now you should be ready to go craft an excellent case and win all of your affirmative debates!

As always, you can email completed cases to **Rachel.Stevens@NCPA.org** for a free case critique. Don't forget to also join the discussion in the comments below. Good luck!