



LD March/April 2014

Neg Analysis

The current resolution, **Resolved: Placing political conditions on humanitarian aid to foreign countries is unjust**, asks debaters to consider a difficult question fraught with ethical and geopolitical questions. Is it unjustified to condition much-needed aid to citizens of foreign nations on political reforms by their government? Today, we're going to consider the negative side of this debate.

We'll start out with an investigation of some key terms. If you already read the aff analysis for this topic, you can skip to the middle of page 4.

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.

Of course, as the negative, you will probably want to emphasize the conditions which punish egregious behavior, such as human rights abuses.



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 teams will use "**justice**" as their value. If you're a regular LDer, chances are you're already pretty prepared to debate about justice. The crucial question will be what you should select as your criterion.

Many negatives on this topic will choose to use **utilitarianism** as their criterion. This is a strategic choice, as long as you are prepared to win "conditions solve problems" and/or "unconditional aid makes things worse." The foundation of this argument is the idea that crises requiring humanitarian aid often stem either directly (such as wars and genocides) or indirectly (such as famine) from corruption and/or incompetence in the government of the recipient country. In order to end the cycle of crisis, then, the government must make reforms. This argument can be used to take out many affirmative impacts (you can say "you don't solve the root cause; impacts will just reoccur later"). Another similar argument is that unconditional aid props up bad regimes, because it legitimizes them and prevents their demise by correcting some of their failures.



Here is **evidence** on that point:

(Adam Groves, International Relations writer & MSc in Global Governance and Diplomacy from Oxford University, "The Politics of Aid: Helping Darfur?," E-International Relations, <http://www.e-ir.info/2007/12/13/the-politics-of-aid-helping-darfur/>, December 13 2007)

Far from 'helping' those in need, aid can exacerbate conflicts by aggravating inter and intra community relations. It will be argued that this occurs in at least two ways: First, when vertical structures of accountability and authority are affected; and secondly, when horizontal relations within groups and sub-groups are undermined.

Recent analysis of famines demonstrates that humanitarian aid affects social and political contracts between groups and their leaders. When outsiders provide substantial relief, the result may be that leaders are abrogated of their welfare responsibilities and can instead devote their energies and resources to war-fighting. De Waal has noted that 'history is replete with successful methods of preventing famine' and that 'common to them are versions of [a] political contract that impose political obligations on rulers'. These 'anti-famine contracts' are enforced by holding leaders accountable for their actions (2002: 5). They assert that famine is not a failing of the system, but instead occurs as a result of deliberate political violence (Sen, 1981). When an emphasis is placed on assigning responsibility for crises leaders are held accountable by society and as a result there is an incentive for them to work for the interests of their people (de Waal, 2002: 5). Conversely, when aid agencies and NGOs take responsibility for the welfare of populations, the disaster is reframed as humanitarian and the political responsibilities which leaders have to their people are undermined (Edkins, 2002: 12; Bradbury, 1995: 168). Equally worrying, if substantial aid is diverted to militia leaders, they may be able to use the resources to secure power without having 'to earn the trust and support of local populations' (Prendergast, 1996: 35). Both of these processes have been observed in the Horn of Africa (Prendergast, 1995: 42).



Similarly, here is **evidence** arguing that unconditional humanitarian aid not only creates bad outcomes, it also trades off with serious pursuit of meaningful political systems, which are what is truly needed, because the international community feels placated and as though they've "done their part":

(Amelia Branczik, "Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance," Beyond Intractability, Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, <<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/humanitarian-aid>>, February 2004)

The 'humanitarian alibi' has been defined as "the misuse of the humanitarian idea and humanitarian workers by governments eager to do as little as possible in economically unpromising regions like sub-Saharan Africa."^[2] Humanitarian aid gives the appearance that the international community is at least doing something, but "humanitarian intervention in the absence of a political solution solves nothing."^[3] In the case of Sudan, relief efforts have been called "an excuse to do nothing," a result of the fact that the West has "no great interest" in political intervention to end the fighting.^[4]

Humanitarian aid that ensures that non-combatants are fed, sheltered, and healthy, but does not alleviate the violence around them, can lead to the "specter of the well-fed dead." Even more disturbing, the provision of humanitarian assistance can give non-combatants a mistaken sense of security and protection by the international community, with tragic consequences.

Another good argument is that violent or unstable political conditions in a nation can make it impossible for aid workers to safely operate in a particular area. In these cases, distribution of aid without political conditions may become physically impossible.

Because many affirmatives will structure their cases around deontology and duty-based ethics, if you select util as a criterion, you will want to be prepared to have debates about **deontology vs.**



utilitarianism. Make sure to brush up on your readiness for these debates, as they are sure to factor in to numerous rounds on this topic.

Here is **evidence** criticizing the mindset that neutrality in humanitarian aid is ethical:

(Alina Sajed, PhD Candidate @ McMaster University, "Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Ethical and Moral Dilemmas of Humanitarian Action," YCISS Working Paper Number 31, <http://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/1347/YCI0019.pdf.txt?sequence=3>, January 2005)

As Brauman (1998) aptly remarks, "to do good is accompanied by a feeling of omnipotence, "an excessive and smug faith in the morality of humanitarian action" (192). Humanitarianism's self-expressed goal, as purported by International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) creed, is to save lives, all lives, and feed and cure people, all people, without any regard to political consequences. Since humanitarian action is and should be completely apolitical and neutral, why should aid workers be preoccupied with the consequences of their actions, which are very much political? It is puzzling that such an attitude has been embraced for decades, in spite of the disastrous consequences it provoked. How is it possible that in situations characterized by such deep political conflict and turmoil, in which the very idea and action of assistance is a sort of intervention, we can comfortably believe that our actions will have no political consequences, that our endeavours are protected by a vacuum of neutrality that seals all implications shut? I think it is important to note that one of the main causes for the tragic consequences of humanitarian action is specifically this divide between the political and the humanitarian/ethical, this unproblematic embrace of neutrality and impartiality as flawless guidelines (see Brauman 1998; Brauman 2000; Warner 1999).

Another option for a negative criterion is [social contract theory](#). The thesis of this argument is that a **government has no obligations to citizens of other nations**. You might even want to argue that, since budgets are finite, foreign aid trades off with spending on domestic needs, which is unjust. Similarly, you



could suggest that a government's obligations to securing the well-being of its own citizenry extend to *requiring* political conditions, if they promote national interests.

Once you have chosen a value and criterion, don't forget to always relate your arguments back to your value/criterion: how does each point build towards a win under the framework you've set up for the round?

You will also want to prepare some defense to common affirmative arguments. One approach is to argue that **all aid is political**, even if it is unconditional. Unconditional aid's political effects also tend to be very harmful. This means that the aff shouldn't get offense premised off of supposed "neutrality," because there is no such thing. This ties in well with the arguments above about why a cost/benefit analysis (util) is a superior way to evaluate the debate.

Here is **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)

Mary Anderson, author of 'Do No Harm', in which she sets out the lessons learned from the 'Local Capacities for Peace Project', describes the way outsiders enter and assume important roles in these circumstances as *"the most complex moral, as well as practical, challenges aid workers face"* (Anderson, 1999: 146). When international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes part of that context and thus also of the conflict. According to Anderson, experiences show that aid's economic and political resources affect conflict in five predictable ways: Aid resources are often stolen by warriors and used to support armies and buy weapons. • Aid affects markets by reinforcing either the war economy or the peace economy. •



The distributional impacts of aid affect inter-group relationships, either feeding tensions or reinforcing connections. • Aid substitutes for local resources required to meet civilian needs, freeing them to support conflict. • Aid legitimizes people and their actions or agendas, supporting the pursuit of either war or peace (Anderson, 1999: 39). Complex emergencies are not only characterized by the complexity of the needs of a population under threat, but the real element of complexity lies in the political factors which underpin the humanitarian crisis (Weller, 2005: 34). One devastating example of politicized aid happened in the Cambodian refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border at the end of the Cold War, when humanitarian aid quickly became a renewable source of funding for the Khmer Rouge. It not only exacerbated the plight of the refugees, but also contributed to the continuation of the conflict (Mikolajuk, 2005: 2-3).⁴⁶ Another case happened in Sudan, when humanitarian aid was blocked by the deliberate strategies of merchants who wanted to profit from higher food prices and distress-sales of animals. The latter example shows that even the simplest forms of relief can be subject to manipulation and political influence and maintains the widespread assertion that there actually is no form of aid that is simply 'saving lives'. Relief operations will always be accompanied by hidden side effects, including the possibility that aid is fuelling or prolonging war (Vaux, 2006: 248).

Here is more **evidence**, which explicitly makes the argument that aid givers should engage in political negotiations, since their work so deeply involves political outcomes:

(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)

Analysis in chapter 3 and 4 has shown that humanitarian aid usually involves a critical political factor, which is circumscribed by ethical rules. Nevertheless, the whole confusion about the humanitarian-political relationship seems to be the fact that humanitarianism is a form of politics in which it is useful to assert that one is non-political (Fowler, 2005: 54). Even though



some relief agencies keep up their non-political façade, efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance, especially in complex emergency crisis, cannot be divorced from overall political objectives. The involvement of external actors in relief agencies and the influence aid has for instance on warfare puts humanitarian workers inevitably into a position of responsibility in taking political impacts into account and to try to shape it accordingly; a rather painful situation for NGOs that wish to retain their focus on managerial disaster relief (Weller, 2005: 42). For this reason, humanitarian organizations need to get more involved in the broader political arena, and to think more like political actors to be able to take appropriate action and to avoid manipulation or long-term damages on a society. Humanitarians who are aware of the drivers and incentives involved in an emergency situation are more sensitive towards tensions that may arise, and are more aware of possibilities as much as threats (Harmer, 2005: 4).

A similar point you can make is that recipient nation leaders often perceive aid agencies as having a political agenda, so insistence on neutrality is understood as a condition. This can be used to answer affirmative claims that “conditions fail because recipient governments say ‘no.’” You can argue this card proves that perception of aid being conditional and politically-motivated is inevitable, and therefore it isn’t offense for the affirmative

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)

Despite the best of intentions, international organizations can never leave the local political context completely out of consideration, in particular during civil crisis or when authorities are corrupt. It is the nature of their programs in development, humanitarian affairs or human rights that often lead to either tensions or conflicts with the government or other elites (Dijkzeul,



2003: 222). Local chiefs, for instance, might see foreign aid as undermining their role as guardians and benefactors of the poor in their communities, especially if they can claim no credit from allowing aid delivery in their territory. They might even interpret agencies' insistence that neutrality must be respected as a condition on aid imposed by an organization with a political agenda. The fact that it is in conformity with an internationally recognized set of standards is rarely appreciated (McIvor, 2003: 13).

It is also useful to be able to defend against the affirmative argument that conditions hurt suffering, innocent people. Here is **evidence** claiming that structuring conditions to function as "[smart sanctions](#)" allows the success of conditionality without harming the most vulnerable citizens:

(Amelia Branczik, "Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance," Beyond Intractability, Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, <<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/humanitarian-aid>>, February 2004)

Although conditionality can be very effective, those enforcing it may face significant difficulties. Donors must coordinate so that they don't undermine each other. Alternative sources of revenue that might weaken donors' leverage, such as recipients' access to natural resources, must be cut off. The potential cost to more vulnerable members of society must be alleviated if necessary, through the use of 'smart sanctions' with humanitarian exemptions. Careful use of carrots and sticks can involve slicing the carrot -- providing aid in installments, to maintain leverage.

The idea here is that conditions can be targeted to only affect elites in a society, instead of broadly applying to all citizens. There are a number of similar solutions to the problem of abandoning the needy. If you are going to make this kind of argument, you will want to emphasize that your job as the negative is to defend that conditions *can be just*, not to defend that *all conditions are always just*.



Another avenue you may want to pursue is the argument that **all foreign aid is always unjust**, because any kind of foreign intervention violates crucial principles of sovereignty. I'm not going to discuss this argument in-depth in this guide, but it should be very easy for you to find evidence, if you're interested. Chances are, your friends in policy/CX have huge backfiles on this subject.

That covers the basics of the negative side. 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 negative 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!