

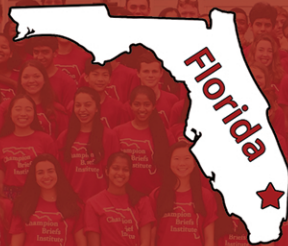


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Nov/Dec Lincoln-Douglas Topic Analysis
Presented by the Champion Briefs Institute

Resolved: Wealthy nations have an obligation to provide development assistance to other nations.

Introduction

The Nov/Dec topic is very similar to the Jan/Feb 2014 resolution, “Resolved: Developing countries should prioritize environmental protection over resource extraction when the two are in conflict.” That topic, like the present one, was about international questions of development. And, like Nov/Dec today, the topic was enormously broad. The breadth of the topic creates exciting possibilities for both aff and neg, but that comes with the potential for debaters to get bogged down in minutia. There are so many countries to analyze, not to mention all sorts of development assistance, so it would help all debaters to start their first tournament with arguments that generally apply to the resolution. That way, you’ll have plenty to say even when a team narrows the debate to individual examples. As debates progress, you have the topic knowledge to innovate, with your general strategies as a fallback.

There are multiple questions you should ask throughout your preparation to generate new ideas:

--What types of development assistance have been un- or under-explored in your debates?

--What does it mean for a country to develop?

--How would an affirmative grapple with the historical and structural roots of global wealth inequality? Can it?

--Can the affirmative defend that a small group of nations help another small group of nations? Is there a defensible version of the topic which allows this?

--What is a nation? How can a creative affirmative think outside the box?

Both the affirmative and negative need to remember that the core questions of the topic are the most fruitful for debate. The affirmative should not shy away from the solvency debate on whether development assistance reduces poverty. It is easier for the aff to talk about the ideal of assistance, but that needs to be coupled with a pragmatic discussion of the aff’s results. That’s true even for a non-consequentialist affirmative; though consequences aren’t the only things that matter, it still matters whether the aff actually helps the people it intends to.

Similarly, the neg should be prepared to argue that development assistance should not take place, or that it should take place in a more limited form. It might seem easier to just kritik the

aff for not going far enough, which is a valid negative strategy, but the topic isn't so aff biased that it'd be a losing battle to easily negate the topic.

Historical Overview

Development assistance as we know it began with the Marshall Plan, an effort by the United States to assist Western Europe with their economic recovery. This took place in the aftermath of World War II, since countries like Germany and France faced significant destruction and devastated economies. That is why foreign aid, according to Williams, "originated as a result of the very powerful position of the United States" after the war.¹ Afterwards, lots of other countries, and the new institutions they supported, joined in the provision of foreign aid. According to Homi Kharas of Brookings, the evolution of development aid has been linked to "decolonization, the Cold War, and...responses to oil shocks and other economic forces linked with globalization," additionally including "environmental pressures" and "democratization."² All of these changes in world systems have informed the founding activities of international organizations like the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the World Bank, and other financial institutions like the European Investment Bank and Islamic Development Bank.³

Numerous national and non-governmental organizations participate in development assistance as well. Foreign aid by the US, in its current form, began with the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, facilitating development aid to foreign governments, their militaries, local businesses, and NGOs.⁴

Today, the United States spends the most amount of money on foreign aid, according to OECD data. Germany takes second, the UK takes third, and France and Japan take fourth and fifth respectively. Sweden, while sixth on that list, spends the largest percentage of its GNP on foreign aid.⁵ Though the US spends the most dollars, foreign aid remains a shockingly small percentage of GDP. It's only .17%, making the US twentieth on the OECD list topped by Sweden. The target encouraged by the UN is "more than 0.7 percent."⁶ As a percentage of the federal

¹ DG Williams. "The History of International Development Aid." N.d.
<https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/8063/WILLIAMS%20History%20of%20International%20Development%20Aid%202013.pdf?sequence=2>

² Homi Kharas. "Development Assistance in the 21st Century." Contribution to the VIII Salamanca Forum. July 2009.
https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/11_development_aid_kharas-1.pdf

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_development_aid_agencies#Multilateral_or_international

⁴ James McBride. "How Does the U.S. Spend Its Foreign Aid?" Council on Foreign Relations. April 11th, 2017.
<https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/how-does-us-spend-its-foreign-aid>

⁵ Joe Myers. "Foreign aid: These countries are the most generous." World Economic Forum. August 19th, 2016.
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⁶ James McBride. "How Does the U.S. Spend Its Foreign Aid?" Council on Foreign Relations. April 11th, 2017.
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budget, the US spends less than 1 percent, though a large majority of those surveyed believe it's around 25 percent.⁷ The recent Trump budget proposal promises to slash the budgets for foreign aid and diplomacy, despite the fact they are already so small. Foreign aid appears to be a favored target of politicians who can convince voters, unaware of how little we spend, that money going overseas is somehow worthless. The political and budgetary dynamics of this topic will matter just as much as its ethical and legal dimensions.

Definitions

The term “wealthy nations” is defined by Victor Rodwin in a comparative analysis of health systems as “the top two-thirds of all OECD members, measured in terms of gross domestic product per capita, in 2002 U.S. dollars, after adjusting for the relative purchasing power of the currencies in these nations.”⁸ This means that “wealthy nations” include a variety of countries beyond our intuitive idea of the wealthiest nations. If you analyze GDP totals from the OECD, you find that this definition includes nations from Luxembourg, to the United States, to Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Japan, and the Netherlands.⁹ A lot of countries are wealthy enough under this definition to be topical actors. The negative may want to find a more limiting definition to exclude certain affirmatives which specify a country that is debatably “developing” or “developed.” For example, on the Jan/Feb 2014 topic, there was a topicality debate over whether China counted as a developing country.

An “obligation” is defined by Google Definitions as “an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound; a duty or commitment.” Since the resolution does not specify a moral obligation, the aff could circumvent an ethics debate and simply argue that international law mandates the provision of development aid. This definition could also generate competition for a conditions counterplan, which conditions the provision of development aid on certain requirements. Arguably a form of aid that can be rescinded is not compatible with a “duty or commitment.”

“Provide” is defined by Merriam Webster, as an intransitive verb, to mean “to make preparation to meet a need” or especially “to supply something for sustenance or support.”¹⁰ However, the resolution might be using “provide” as a transitive verb, meaning “to supply or make available” or “to have as a condition.”¹¹ Both definitions, assuming the transitive verb

⁷ Nandini Tivakaran. “Foreign aid is tiny part of federal budget.” USA Today. March 17th, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/03/17/foreign-aid-tiny-part-federal-budget/99304432/>

⁸ Victor G. Rodwin. “Comparative Analysis of Health Systems Among Wealthy Nations.” Jonas & Kovner’s Health Care Delivery in the United States, Springer, May 14th, 2014. Google Books.

⁹ <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/provide>

¹¹ Id.

tense, suggest that the aff can permute the conditions counterplan in two ways. One is more obvious, that provide means “to have as a condition.” The other, “to supply or make available,” implies that the aff can just make development assistance an open possibility so long as other expectations are met. These definitions could also mean that conditional aid becomes a topical aff.

Lastly, “nation” is defined by Dictionary.com as “a large body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own.”¹² Of course, other definitions of the term do not suggest that a government, existent or aspirational, is necessary. Oxford Dictionaries defines “nation” as “A large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.”¹³ All of this opens up possibilities for the aff to talk about aid to Indian Nations, stateless people (like refugees or Palestinians) and even some cultures (the Black “nation”).

Affirmative Arguments

International Law AC — This aff would argue that the UN Charter obligates wealthy nations to provide development assistance to other nations. The emerging field of international development law is discussed by Edward Kwakwa in “Emerging International Development Law and Traditional International Law—Congruence or Cleavage?”¹⁴ The strategic value of this aff is that it can engage both the moral and legal dimensions of the term “obligation.” This AC would establish that the aff burden is to prove either a moral or legal obligation, and that international law is sufficient to prove both for development assistance. This framework is also considerably harder to turn than others.

Global Justice AC — This aff would argue that citizens of wealthy nations are indirectly responsible for poverty and underdevelopment abroad. This argument would be coupled with a cosmopolitan case for extending our moral obligations beyond national borders. The “accident of birth” leads to arbitrary and unjust outcomes where some are born in poor countries and others in rich countries. Consequently, wealthy nations have an obligation to assist people in need irrespective of where they live. Our obligations extend to all of humanity, not just citizens of own nation. Authors to look into are Thomas Pogge and Martha Nussbaum.

Sustainable Development AC – this aff would argue that development assistance is essential to environmental protection in developing countries. With foreign assistance, less wealthy countries would no longer feel the need to accept pollution as a necessary evil. Developing countries can pursue economic growth without relying on unsustainable forms of

¹² <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/nation>

¹³ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nation>

¹⁴ <http://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1728&context=gjicl>

manufacturing and trade. An aff like this can be read with a Util framework, arguing that the greatest good for the greatest number requires an internationally coordinated response to challenges like climate change. This can also be read with an environmentalism framework which argues that protecting the environment on which life depends is our paramount moral obligation.

Creative “Nation” Affs — these affs would provide development assistance to communities which share a similar culture, or those whom are arguably sovereign nations. For example, native Americans in the United States are sometimes described as “First Nations,” and members of the black community have argued for a black nationalist philosophy which calls for self-determination through separation. These affs would be creatively topical since they go beyond how we commonly think of the nation unit, but affs like these are best for critical debaters who would prefer not to defend conventional models of development aid, while still being in the direction of the topic.

Util AC — This aff would argue that development assistance is essential to preventing terrorist attacks. According to the Los Angeles Times, the US currently uses development aid as a means of fighting terrorism, yet that may be reconsidered under Trump.¹⁵ This would enable you to access impacts of either nuclear terrorism or failed states (the utter collapse of developing countries and ensuing chaos).

Negative Arguments

Politics DA — the neg argument here would be that foreign aid is a contentious budgetary issue for many legislators, making it harder for Trump to achieve a “win” on agenda items like tax reform. The link to the affirmative is solid on this topic, and it links to the general principle of the resolution since the US is a wealthy nation. You would have to deal with the aff response that an exception (that the US should not give aid) does not disprove the general principle (that wealthy nations generally should give aid). So, you’re better off saving this disad for teams that read plans about the US.

Colonialism K — this is probably the best neg argument on the topic. Development aid, according to thinkers like Arturo Escobar, relies on a colonial relationship which relegates less wealthy countries to the periphery (always being dependent and inferior).¹⁶ This kritik is pretty strategic, and gets to the core of the topic, since it challenges the very notion of “development.” The alternative would pose more radical analysis with a different method for

¹⁵ <http://www.latimes.com/world/global-development/la-fg-development-aid-terrorism-20170305-story.html>

¹⁶ Arturo Escobar. “Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements. *Social Text*, no. 31/32, 1992. <http://www.unc.edu/~aescobar/text/eng/escobar.1992.SocialText.31-32.pdf>

approaching problems of structural poverty and environmental crisis in lesser industrialized countries.

Realism NC — the framework would establish that a state's primary obligation is to ensure the security of its citizens. The contention would argue that development assistance does not have any tangible security benefit, and thus it runs counter to state obligations. The best framework argument for this case is that states do not have moral obligations in the same way that individuals do. There is also a realist criticism of international law, which makes this NC effective against the international law aff.

Malthus/Overpopulation DA — this disadvantage would argue that development aid is largely responsible for the overpopulation crisis, and that overpopulation leads to a whole host of terrible impacts. To win this debate, you need to win that overpopulation makes the aff's impacts inevitable and worse, so it's a matter of sacrificing people now to avoid even worse problems later. This disad is pretty objectionable, but it's possible to defend the "lifeboat ethics" of these Malthusians as a framework. Lifeboat ethics imagines that we only have a limited ability to save people, and that ignoring those limits would implicate the whole (it would sink the boat, or in this case the planet).

PICs — these counterplans would agree with the premise that wealthy nations should provide development aid but modify the way in which this aid is given. For example, there could be conditions on development aid where countries must agree to improve their human rights records. There is also a case for providing development aid without making the UN Millennium Development Goals a necessary benchmark for success.¹⁷ There are theoretical objections to these arguments (if the negative has the right to introduce these), but still very strategic if the aff specifies enough of their position. If the aff chooses not to, you could read a "spec" argument that the aff must specify exactly how development aid takes place, to which countries, and under what conditions of success/failure.

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