Affirmative: Political Realism

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Resolved: In democratic elections, the public’s right to know ought to be valued above a candidate’s right to privacy.

This case is intended to look at the resolution from the perspective of reality. Application after application show that we should value the public’s right to knowledge above a candidates converse rights. When the resolution is approached from a real-world view, it becomes difficult to refute from the same perspective.  
  
This case has one weakness. While this case is based on the philosophy of political realism, it is not a philosophy case. If your opponent takes this rout your opponent takes in refutation, the whole debate will boil down to whether or not philosophy should be valued above realism, and within the scope of LD, philosophy should win.  
  
NOTE: Some of the points made in this case are purely logical and not evidence based. For rebuttal, you will need to find support, but there is not enough time in the constructive for additional evidence.

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Politicians deserve a greater degree of public scrutiny because of citizens’ democratic rights 5

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Disclosure of private information is justified for public figures 6

For politicians, otherwise private information is important for the public 6

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INTRO

DEFINITIONS

Privacy

Dictionary.com “Privacy” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/privacy>

A personal matter that is concealed; a secret.

Right to Know

Dictionary.com “Right-to-know” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/right-to-know>

Of or relating to laws or policies that make certain government or company data and records available to any individual who has a right or need to know their contents.

VALUE: Truth

Reason to Prefer (value): End Goal

When asking whether or not privacy or discovery should be valued higher, we have to consider the end goal of both. Because of this, we have to ask the question, why would people keep something private, or look for private information? The answer is simple. To keep something private is to attempt to hide the truth, where to search for something, to know, is to try to find the truth. As such, truth is the end goal of both the right to know and the right to privacy.

CRITEREON: Political Realism

Definition

The words, “pollical realism” refers most simply to realism, as it is applied to politics. But what is realism?

Dictionary.com, “Realism” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/realism>

the tendency to view or represent things as they really are.

In short, we should look at politics, and therefore this resolution, as it really is. This means looking at real-world applications to draw out a general rule about the resolution.

Reason to Prefer (Criterion): Accurate Representation

As we realized earlier, the goal of both the right to privacy and the right to knowledge is to find the truth. As such, we should look at the truth as accurately as possible. Some people believe some things, but other people believe other things. To tell what actually is true, we should look at what takes place in reality. Political Realism provides the most accurate representation of the truth available, and as such it is a good way to tell what the truth is and to assess the resolution.

CONTENTION 1: The Truth is Hidden:

You have a right to knowledge, and a politician has a right to privacy, in fact, the resolution before us is asking us to choose between the two. Some people argue that this is a false dichotomy, and that you don’t always have to choose between the two, but I would contend that this is not the case. In order to know what a ‘politician’s right to privacy’ entails, we have to ask what a politician would try to hide. Campaign secrets, illicit activity or etcetera, politicians generally keep things ‘private’ for the purpose of keeping the truth of a matter away from public eyes or scrutiny. In other words, the question of this resolution is not, is your right to knowledge more valuable than a politician’s right to privacy, but rather is your right to accurate knowledge about a politicians character more valuable than a politicians right to keep that truth away from you.

CONTENTION 2: Politicians can’t be trusted

Have you ever heard the statement that politicians cannot be trusted? Weather or not this statement is a joke you tell your friends or children or something you actually believe, most people have come to accept that most politicians are either shady and power hungry, or bumbling and uninformed. A perfect example of this can be seen in the Nixon Administration.

APPLICATION 1: The Nixon Administration

At this point in time, the Nixon Administration is seen as the hallmark of poor politics. If you want to see what a bad government is, you don’t have to look any farther than the Nixon Administration. From statements in court such as, “that depends on what your definition of the word ‘is’ is,” to outright lies, there is no question that the Nixon Administration is a signpost of what government should not be, second only to Machiavelli’s book ‘the Prince’. Unfortunately, the Nixon Administration is not the only administration plagued with a lack of honesty.

APPLICATION 2: 2010 American Elections

As I just said, the Nixon administration is not the only case where we can find corrupt politicians. Another prime example is actually a whole year; 2010. In 2010, according to a graph on govtracks.us, a website dedicated to tracking congress through statistics, almost 150 politicians committed some form of misconduct. 32 counts of crimes regarding their campaign and elections, 16 counts of sexual harassment and abuse, 62 ethics violations, 13 counts of bribery and corruption along with 10 counts of other crimes. If that was not enough, the graph goes on to show that in 2020, through this short time before an election we ALREADY have multiple counts of bribery and corruption in the united states government.

DO NOT READ THE FOLLOWING GRAPH, ITS JUST THE EVIDENCE FOR ABOVE.

<https://www.govtrack.us/misconduct> “Legislator Misconduct Database”, with information taken from <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951p00933065r&view=1up&seq=7>, <https://ethics.house.gov/sites/ethics.house.gov/files/Historical_Chart_Final_Version%20in%20Word_0.pdf>, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/07/29/more-than-two-dozen-members-of-congress-have-been-indicted-since-1980/>, and other sources. GovTrack.us began in 2004 as a project to use technology to make the U.S. Congress more open and accessible. It is the leading non-government source of legislative information and statistics. THE SOURCE DOES NOT PROVIDE A DATE, BUT IT HAS INFORMAION AS RECENT AS 2020. THE SOURCE ALSO DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY AUTHOR INFORMATION, HOWEVER, IT DOES STATE ON ITS WEBSITE THAT THE SOURCE DOES ACTIVE RESEARCH DIRECTLY FROM A NUMBER OF CONGRESSES.

[https://www.govtrack.us/misconductA screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated](https://www.govtrack.us/misconduct)

CONTENTION 3: Your Right to the Truth is Higher Than the Right to Hide it

This may seem like a ‘well no kidding’ statement, but that’s my point. You have a right to know who you are electing, and politicians don’t have the right to hide it. We know, in reality, that politicians will try to hide things that should not be hidden. As such, we should value your right to know the truth higher than any one politician’s right to attempt to hide it from you.

Negative Counter-Brief: Political Realism

This affirmative case is dangerous. Not because the case is particularly strong, but because all the affirmative has to do is say that the affirmative standpoint is practical, and they will likely win the round. 9/10 judges believe themselves, or even want themselves, to be practical. This case plays toward the practical side of the resolution, along with the practical side of judging, making it easier to believe. If someone walks up to you and says that something is true, and they provide concrete proof of it, you are more likely to believe them then if they say the same thing is true from a theoretical basis. The reason for this is that nobody wants to be wrong. When somebody says, ‘*in theory* you are wrong’ you are more likely to throw out what they have to say than if they were to say, ‘according to (insert proof here) you are wrong’. In other words, this case tells judges they are wrong (or correct, depending on their preconceived notions) in a very practical way, which makes it easier to believe. As the negative, the easiest way to refute this sort of argument is to throw out not only the argument its-self, but every argument of its kind. You don’t have to say, ‘we should never look at practical instances within the resolution,’ but you should say ‘practical instances and examples in the resolution are less important than philosophical reasoning.’ This is the easiest way to refute this case, although you will need some strong support. Below are just a few ways you could go about proving this point.  
Please note that below the abbreviations ANA and MPX and RSK refer to Analysis and Impact and Risk (respectively), for an analysis of the quote provided, its impact and the risk of running the argument. Also, any square brackets within quotes are put there to make the quote easier to read. *They do not change the meaning of the quote in any way.* This is allowed in NCFCA.

NCFCA says the debate is of values, not of policy

<https://www.ncfca.org/debate/lincoln-douglas-value/> NCFCA website, DATE UNKNOWN, AUTHOR UNKNOWN, Accessed 7/1/2020

“In NCFCA, Lincoln-Douglas debate resolutions are constructed to create a clash of competing values rather than the adoption of a specific policy. The Lincoln-Douglas debate format is one-on-one debating, named after the famous debates between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln.”

**ANA:** This quote can be rephrased, ‘don’t look at LD resolutions too practically.’ It is generally agreed (although some disagree) in the league that Lincoln Douglas is a philosophy debate. Although some people disagree with this, judges should be told in their judge orientation that the round is philosophy based.

**MPX:** In other words, this quote shows the judge that the completely practical approach is not necessarily the only option. This makes it easier for you to make more philosophically oriented arguments. If you can get your judge to accept that the resolution if philosophical, you won’t have to refute any of the affirmative, policy-type arguments.

**RSK:** Although this quote gets you in the door, it doesn’t say the word ‘philosophy’ in it anywhere. This makes it up to interpretation as to what that means. A simple definition (I have a few with strategies below) should fix this problem, but you have to be careful that you know *all* the applications of the quote. Its easy to overlook a potential aspect of a quote and have your opponent turn it on its head.

Definition of Value 1

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/value>, “value,” DATE UNKNOWN, AUTHOR UNKNOWN, accessed 7/1/2020.

relative worth, merit, or importance: the value of a college education; the value of a queen in chess.

**ANA:** This definition allows you to take the debate back to the value. By pointing out that the value you provide is the measuring stick for HOW the resolution should be evaluated, you can easily show that the practical argumentation is not the end-all, be-all of the debate. The affirmative still has to prove that the value is higher than your own.

**MPX:** This definition allows you to bypass the whole of the affirmative case. If it is true that your value is higher, the rest of their case falls apart.

**RSK:** While this definition will allow you to make the debate a value debate, it will still be a debate over the practical affirmative side, and the less practical, negative side. As soon as you portray the resolution as a competition of the values, you give *both* your case *and* your opponent’s case validity. In other words, you open the doors to a debate over reasons to prefer solely. This is a more secure approach for the negative, however, because the affirmative value of truth is not that strong of a value under the definition.

Definition of Value 2 (Axiology)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-theory/>, “Value Theory,” the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, First published Tue Feb 5, 2008; substantive revision Thu Jul 28, 2016, written by Mark Schroeder (A professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California. His published work ranges over topics in metaethics, the theory of practical reasons and rationality, epistemology, normative ethics, philosophy of language, metaphysics, and the history of ethics).

The term “value theory” is used in at least three different ways in philosophy. In its broadest sense, “value theory” is a catch-all label used to encompass all branches of moral philosophy, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, and sometimes feminist philosophy and the philosophy of religion — whatever areas of philosophy are deemed to encompass some “evaluative” aspect. In its narrowest sense, “value theory” is used for a relatively narrow area of normative ethical theory particularly, but not exclusively, of concern to consequentialists. In this narrow sense, [the term] “value theory” is roughly [can be] synonymous with “axiology”. Axiology can be thought of as primarily concerned with classifying what things are good, and how good they are. For instance, a traditional question of axiology concerns whether the objects of value are subjective psychological states, or objective states of the world.

**ANA:** LD Debate under this resolution is a debate that is over value theory (Or Axiology). We are being asked which side of the resolution is *more valuable*. This means that if you define exactly what you are debating, the whole debate becomes easier for a less practical, more value centered negative case.

**MPX:** This quote makes a value strong negative infinitely easier to win. If you stress that the resolution asks a question of axiology, you can easily throw out all the affirmative ‘practical philosophy.’

**RSK:** Although this argument is reasonable, it opens the doors to an affirmative saying that their value (truth) is the higher value *axiologically.* This will require more research to refute, but be aware that it is not true. Without more support this argument cannot be refuted. On face value it is true, but that is where your job as a debater begins.

Works Cited

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