Purpose of Government  
Affirmative Case by Tobias Park



At first glance, oxygen masks may not appear to have anything to do with the purpose of government or the resolution. However, as this case explains in more detail, they demonstrate an important principle: that it is essential to put priority on helping yourself before focusing on others. Using this analogy, this case aims to convince the judge that the debate should be centered on the purpose of government, and that this purpose of government is essentially to uphold nationalism.

This case portrays nationalism as a government focusing on looking after its own citizens, while a government that values globalism places priority on the whole world at the expense of the country’s own interests. Then, since both of these choices involve the government, the case argues that we are trying to decide what the role of government is in society, and that the best way to do this is to examine the purpose of government (hence the value of “Purpose of Government”). It then goes on to prove with two contentions how nationalism is the main purpose of government while globalism is not.

The applications of the Paris Climate Accord and the Ireland Economic Bailout show that nationalism is recognized as the primary purpose of government and that globalism causes a government to neglect its own citizens and fail this purpose. Come back to these applications at least once in your rebuttal speeches to remind the judge how they prove the ideas in your case.

If the Neg tries to replace your definitions with others that have different meanings, stand your ground. Your definitions, especially the definition of nationalism, are important, so make sure you can defend them. The Neg may also try to argue that some governments do not exist to protect their citizens, but rather to protect the government at the expense of the citizens (an extreme example of this may be North Korea). Argue that these governments are the exception to the rule and that, as you explained in the case, the recognized intended purpose of government is to protect the interests of its citizens. Debate your case and don’t get pulled into the Neg’s paradigm.

Purpose of Government

On any commercial airplane, you’ll find oxygen masks stored in the ceiling in case of emergency. Let me ask a hypothetical question: If you and a young child were flying together when the oxygen masks suddenly deploy, would you follow instructions and do your assigned job of putting on your own mask first, or would you put a mask on the child’s face first? You might be tempted to put priority on the child; however, Omid Safi, a columnist for “On Being,” explains,

*Quote* “So if the adult passengers try to put on the mask on the children first, they may well pass out before they have put the mask on the children.”[[1]](#footnote-1) *Unquote*

So in this scenario, the others on the plane become secondary to the primary purpose of protecting your **own** well-being. We cannot even begin to consider aiding others before we first help ourselves. Because this same principle applies to the resolution, I stand *Resolved: Nationalism ought to be valued above globalism.*

# Definitions

Collins English Dictionary defines **nationalism** as:

“The doctrine that national interest, security, etc. are more important than international considerations.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Free Dictionary defines **globalism** as:

“The policy or doctrine of involving one's country in international affairs, alliances, etc.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Essentially, nationalism places first priority on one’s own country, while globalism puts the emphasis on other countries.

# Resolutional Analysis

# Now let’s look at some resolutional analysis. In this debate, we are asked whether a society should value a policy of nationalism or globalism. In either of these scenarios, the government is the actor. In other words, it would be the government’s job to uphold either nationalism or globalism, since both involve policies that would have to be adopted by the government. As a result, we must look primarily at the government and its role in society. The basic question is: should the government uphold nationalism or globalism?

# Value

My value is **Purpose of Government**, which I define as, “The duty for which a government exists to perform.” I believe “purpose of government” is the highest value in today’s debate round for the following reason:

## Value Link: Role of Government

As I mentioned, this debate is directly concerned with the role of government in society. The best way to determine whether the role of government is to uphold nationalism or globalism is to go back and examine the purpose of government.

# Contention 1: The Intended Purpose of Government is to Uphold Nationalism

Similar to how your duty with the oxygen masks is to secure your **own** well-being first, the duty of government should be to look after its **own** citizens. Former Senator Arlen Specter once stated,

*Quote* “The fundamental purpose of government is to protect **its** citizens.”[[4]](#footnote-4) *Unquote (bolded for emphasis)*

Founding Father Thomas Jefferson also said,

*Quote* “The purpose of government is to enable the people of a nation to live in safety and happiness. Government exists for the interests of the governed, not for the governors.”[[5]](#footnote-5) *Unquote*

In other words, the whole reason a government is created in the first place is to look after its **own** citizens, **not** to protect the interests of other countries. Governments exist for the intended purpose of protecting and promoting the interests of their own citizens. To say it plainly, government’s purpose is to uphold nationalism.

## Application: Paris Climate Accord

President Obama sought to involve the U.S. in promoting globalism with the Paris Climate Accord, which aimed to reduce emissions and global warming.[[6]](#footnote-6) However, the agreement would have drastically raised energy bills for Americans, reduced U.S. GDP by more than $2.5 trillion, and cut about 400,000 jobs by 2035.[[7]](#footnote-7) In May, 2017, President Trump pulled America *out* of the agreement **in the name of nationalism,** according to an article from *Americans for Tax Reform*:

*Quote* “At a press conference in the White House Rose Garden President Trump stated that in order to fulfill his **solemn** **duty** to protect **America** and **its** citizens, ‘The U.S. will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord.’”[[8]](#footnote-8) *Unquote (bolded for emphasis)*

President Trump acknowledged that the inherent purpose of government is to protect the concerns of its citizens, and that globalism, which harms these interests, directly obstructs this purpose. This leads me to my 2nd contention:

# Contention 2: Upholding Globalism Is Not the Purpose of Government

Now don’t get me wrong— I’m not saying we should completely neglect the interests of the rest of the world. We should care about international matters to a reasonable extent, but not at the expense of our own nation. Just as assisting passengers in airplane emergencies is important but secondary to helping ourselves, reaching out to other nations is important but a secondary goal, and only possible if our own country is well. On the contrary, if government places first priority on other nations ahead of its own citizens, it fails its purpose and harms the society under its jurisdiction.

## Application: 2010 Ireland Economic Bailout

A good example of this is the 2010 Ireland Economic Bailout, in which Ireland bailed out of the European Union under pressure from other countries to do so.[[9]](#footnote-9) However, while the bailout helped other nations, it harmed the citizens of Ireland. According to Business Insider:

*Quote* “If you cannot protect your own then what good is your government? This is the question Europeans ultimately have to be asking themselves today….Their governments do not exist to protect them. This Irish “bailout” is not helping the people of Ireland. It is helping to protect the interests of **foreign** bankers. In the case of most Irish citizens it is in fact making matters worse.” [[10]](#footnote-10) *Unquote (bolded for emphasis)*

Because the bailout harmed the interests of the people, the Irish government failed to fulfill its inherent purpose of providing for the citizens it was instituted to help! As far as the Irish were concerned, their government proved effectively useless. Just as we cannot put an oxygen mask on our neighbor before first securing our own well-being, likewise we cannot place the interests of other nations above our own. Instead, government must put priority on its inherent purpose of protecting the interests of its own citizens.

Opposing This Case

# Definitions

This entire case rests on the idea that nationalism is defined as a policy that your nation’s interests are more important than other nations’ interests. However, while this definition is technically valid, there are other accepted definitions which define nationalism in a slightly different way. For example:

“An extreme form of patriotism marked by a feeling of superiority over other countries” –Oxford Dictionaries[[11]](#footnote-11)

“The feelings of affection and pride that people have for their country” –Cambridge English Dictionary[[12]](#footnote-12)

“A feeling that people have of being loyal to and proud of their country often with the belief that it is better and more important than other countries” –Meriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary[[13]](#footnote-13)

If nationalism is only “a feeling of affection,” the Aff’s argument that upholding nationalism is the purpose of government is weakened considerably. In your NC, replace the Aff definition with one of these definitions to prove that nationalism isn’t quite what the Aff says it is, and is thus not the purpose of government.

# Value

To attack the value of “Purpose of Government,” point out that it is not always valuable to pursue the purpose of a government because different governments have different goals. For example, the purpose of dictatorships are not to help the citizens, but to benefit the dictator or the government at the expense of society.

Furthermore, argue that it is also not a good idea to make nationalism the purpose of government because following a country’s interests can lead to results that are not reasonable or valuable, depending on what the interests of that country are. For example, as the early colonists were settling in America, the interest of King George was to oppress them with unfair taxation and restrictions.

Finally, if you successfully replace the definition of nationalism as described above, you can argue that the 1st contention no longer applies and that the impact is that the value is non-unique. Neither side of the resolution achieves the purpose of government, so it shouldn’t be the value for the round.

# Contentions

Again, if you change the definition of nationalism, you can argue that the 1st contention no longer makes sense. Furthermore, if you defeat the Aff’s value, you can argue that both contentions no longer matter to the round since we are not even talking about the purpose of government anymore.

If you want to attack the contentions head-on, look closely at what is being said. The Aff is essentially arguing that a nation should only care about itself. In your rebuttal, try to portray nationalism as a mindset in which a nation becomes overly-selfish.

1. Omid Safi, On Being, “Put On Your Own Mask First: The Safety of Self-Care”, published April 7, 2016, available online at <https://onbeing.org/blog/put-on-your-own-mask-first-the-safety-of-self-care/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Collins Dictionary, “Definition of ‘nationalism’”, available online at <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/nationalism> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Free Dictionary, “globalism”, available online at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/globalism> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Arlen Specter, BrainyQuote, “Arlen Specter Quotes”, available online at <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/arlenspect167604.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Thomas Jefferson, AZQuotes.com, available online at <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/371390> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Camila Domonoske, NPR: National Public Radio, “So What Exactly Is In The Paris Climate Accord?”, published December 2015, Updated June 1, 2017, available online at <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/06/01/531048986/so-what-exactly-is-in-the-paris-climate-accord> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Justin Sykes, Americans for Tax Reform, “Obama’s Paris Agreement: All Cost and No Benefit for the U.S.”, published May 31, 2017, available online at <https://www.atr.org/obamas-paris-agreement-all-cost-and-no-benefit-us> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Bruno Waterfield, The Telegraph, “Ireland forced to take EU and IMF bail-out package,” published November 22, 2010, available online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financialcrisis/8150137/Ireland-forced-to-take-EU-and-IMF-bail-out-package.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Pragmatic Capitalist, Business Insider, “If It Can’t Protest Its Citizens, Why Does Government Exist At All?”, published November 30, 2010, available online at <http://www.businessinsider.com/if-it-cant-protest-its-citizens-why-does-government-exist-at-all-2010-11> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Oxford Dictionaries, “Definition of nationalism in English”, available online at <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nationalism> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Cambridge English Dictionaries, “Definition of ‘nationalism’ –English Dictionary”, available online at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/nationalism> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary “nationalism”, available online at <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/nationalism> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)