**Section 1 is framework:**

**First,** Obligations are agent specific. The obligations of a surgeon are different than that of a soldier, whose obligation is different from that of the government. In terms of the resolution, the actor is a government because a) it’s specified explicitly **AND** b) this is the only actor capable of requiring employers to pay a living wage.

**Second**, obligations also differ between contexts. Abstract rules, which seek to apply to all action, can never account for the vast number of exceptions to every rule in the governmental context. An abstract appeal to an obligation to not kill, for instance, cannot be appealed to in times of war or in questions of the death penalty since the state operates with an entirely different purpose in different contexts. Any theory that does not make these specific contextual analyses will always be lacking insofar as it will attempt to simplify and reduce events that can only be explained through context.

**Next**, according to Merriam-Webster[[1]](#footnote-1) dictionary, ought is used to express obligation. Prefer this definition because this is the first definition on Merriam-Webster, and thus the most commonly used definition. The Online Etymology Dictionary[[2]](#footnote-2) explains the main modern use of ought is As an auxiliary verb expressing duty or obligation. Common usage is the most important standard in determining the legitimacy of definitions because words can only obtain meanings by how they are used.

**Because** the actor is a government, the **value** is fulfilling government obligations. **The standard** is maximizing expected well-being, Several warrants:

**First,** Governments are created and given authority for the purpose of protecting their citizens—thus, that is their primary obligation. If this were not true, there would be no rational reason we would consent to being governed, as the government could abuse our rights. The fact that we pay taxes proves the obvious fact that we expect protection from the government. This link turns your meta-ethic because no starting point that is rational can conclude that the aff framework is wrong. Also answers the is ought fallacy because **a)** the is wouldn’t have come about if there wasn’t a good reason for it, i.e. government’s wouldn’t have started protecting citizens if they ought not have, and **b)** my argument is that government’s ought to protect citizens to respect consent.

**Second**, the difference between actions and omissions isn’t relevant for governments, especially in economic policy. That distinction makes sense in the context of individual lives and actions, but government’s are third parties created for resolving conflicts between individuals that would have otherwise been resolved violently. The whole point of economic policy is to help adjudicate competing conflicts of interest. **Also,** act omission distinction has no unique warrant because omissions take the action of doing nothing. Everything is an action—the distinction is purely semantic. **Furthermore**, the act-omission distinction is artificial because human decision-making evaluates both the choice to do something and the choice to abstain from it. Since all policy-makers must regulate third party action, both action and inaction are calculated choices that affect populations—when nations make choices, their choices are simply comparisons between expected worlds of doing and forgoing the action. **But,** even if the act-omission exists, proving an omission does not sufficiently excuse responsibility, but instead collapses down to the next tier. For example, we’d think it’s bad to let a child drown in front of us, but probably okay not to donate all our money to feed starving Indonesian kids. This means we can determine responsibility in omissions based on factors like directness, practicality, or opportunity cost to donate. **And,** governments uniquely can’t diffuse responsibility by omission because governments always have a duty to their citizens. The fact that we can read literature on living wages that attempts to quantify and predict the economic effect indicates that living wage policy is a direct, practical action that government’s can undergo. **If** there is no act-omission distinction, then we are fully complicit with any harms we allow, so actions are moral if they minimize harm. It also means philosophies that focus on actions as opposed to consequences can’t weigh offense since the only effective way of prioritizing competing actions is via act/omission distinction. Also, even if your philosophy could weigh without act/omission, it would do so by analyzing severity of the violation, which requires an analysis of end states, conceding util.

Third, absolute standards are logically incoherent since they produce irresolvable conflicts between duties. Two warrants: **A)** cross apply the argument from number 2 at the beginning of this section about obligations being context specific—this by definition makes absolutism impossible. **B)** If I assume a debt that I become unable to pay, I can either break my promise to pay the debt, or steal the money from someone else, both of which would violate moral rules, making action both required and forbidden, which is incoherent. Governments especially face this dilemma—this is why there’s a whole section of political philosophy dedicated to what constitutes a just war. No one wants to go to war but sometimes the situation is forced upon you by external circumstances you can’t control—throwing your hands in the air and declaring war bad is an incoherent response that would get you laughed out of any conversation with actual government officials. The very nature of a government’s existence puts it in precarious situations where appealing to means based standards is incoherent. Consequentialist standards solve by letting us hierarchically order any list of potential acts in terms of some desired outcome.

**Fourth,** util forces us to talk about what actually happens in the real world since we have to use empirics and analyze the consequences of our actions. This promotes topic education because we have to research the effects of actions and research how those effects will come about, thus learning more about the topic in general. Cross apply why topic ed is important.

**Fifth,** util doesn’t make sense in day in day out life unless you are a hedonistic pig, but util is the only philosophy that adequately resolves rights conflicts while **preserving equality**. The key is the forced choice—no matter which action you take, someone will end up upset, and feel violated. Weighing interests equally in such scenarios is the only way to respect equality, which should be a side-constraint on ethical theories since people are by definition created equal. **Especially true for governments**—policymaking cannot be means based because in a conflict scenario, means based philosophies value the rights of one person over the rights of many people because they hold that every person has infinite worth that ought not be violated. However, governments are equally obligated to every citizen as there is no relevant distinction amongst citizens—thus means based stances would treat citizens unequally, violating the government’s obligation to its people.

**Sixth**, here are preempts to common util complaints:

**A)** It doesn’t matter if there are problems with predicting the future. Util doesn’t require perfection. My argument is that we need to be concerned with consequences that we can expect—this is contextualized in the debate round via link and impact cards. Also, this complaint is empirically denied by the fact that governments have effectively done risk analysis for decades. Lastly solved for by the wording of the standard—we only care about expected consequences**.**

**B)** Saying you can’t aggregate individual interest is silly. I’m not saying 5 pens are more valuable than 1 pen, but rather that when we are forced to choose between 5 pens and 1 pen, we should choose 5 pens. The forced choice is key—in a vacuum all pens are equally important, but in a conflict we should opt to protect more pens if all pens are truly equal. This best preserves equality and also ensures we have backups if the ink in a pen explodes or runs out. Also the aggregation argument is empirically denied—the fact that you could drive on a freeway to get to an airport and fly to the tournament is proof that government can aggregate interests. Government had to use eminent domain to tell people who owned the property prior to construction of said freeway and airport—that’s a perfect example of aggregating society’s interests.

**C)** Saying people have subjective interests is non-responsive. I don’t care if you like different ice cream than me, my argument is that all people dislike poverty and crime, and it’s your privilege of being in an economically elite situation that lets you claim otherwise. Saying masochists disprove doesn’t answer this back. The rarity of true masochism shows that masochists are an exception proving the general rule that there are certain experiences in the human condition that are consistently regarded as disgusting and vile, such as rape and boiling new born babies to death. Also, the beauty of util is we can *account* for masochists in the cost-benefit calculations.

**D)** Probability analysis solves infinite consequences, which are scientifically unverifiable anyways. We take minute impacts and round down their probability to zero. Also, even if the world is infinite, our experience of the world is finite. Decision-making doesn’t have to take into account of the rest of forever, it just have to take into account of what can be predicted.

**E)** Side constraints like the constitution are not means based. They only exist to maximize net benefits—they are not absolute. Founding fathers of the US made a bill of rights because their lives were miserable under British rule—those are consequences informing actions. They didn’t care that British intent was benevolent; they were concerned with the bottom line, which the Constitution was written to reflect. Abraham Lincoln violated the constitution more than any other President in history, but he is revered because he helped stop slavery. Also, the fact that the Supreme Court is constantly re-interpreting the Constitution illustrates that it is a fluid side-constraint, not an absolute one. Also supercharged by the fact that we can add amendments literally whenever we want.

1. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ought [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.etymonline.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)