

# Arguments Don't Care About Your Facts

How to survive spec-knowledge motions without reading the Economist every week

# Disclaimers

- Facts are important, this workshop is meant to serve as a last resort – not as substitute for education
- I didn't invent anything, there are too many people to mention in credits
- Spec-knowledge motions are varied. I'll try and provide examples from different themes throughout the workshop.
- Motions were selected to exemplify a very specific skill, not to criticize or endorse necessarily

# Roadmap

- Psychology
- First principles
- Using analogies
- How to not fuck up a room from OG

# Psychology

- Stress hurts your speeches more than ignorance
- You always know **something** about the motion
- It's likely the rest of the room is also clueless
- The CAs set this motion thinking it will work in the bin room
- In any case, engagement alone will take you far and requires no knowledge
- In 3/4 positions you have someone to copy from

# First Principles

- **Definition:** the fundamental elements of the debate, or it's core questions/clashes. If we strip a debate off of it's specific context and examples – the first principles is what remains
- **Why are they useful?**
  - finding arguments based on only the motion
  - refutations based on poking holes at missing clashes and burdens from the other side, with no need to use facts

# How can we find First Principles?

- Start by mapping out all the basic facts you DO know about the motion, or can infer from the wording  
  
**example:** TH, as Russia, will cease it's economic support of Maduro's government in Venezuela
- Connect this bit of knowledge to logics and our general understanding of the world (e.g. what are the incentives and abilities of different stakeholders? What are the relevant principle frameworks of the debate?)
- Find our burdens of proof using our logical skills and "The Why Method"

# How can we find First Principles?

- Use the basic structure of burdens for different motion types:
  - Policy:** Problem, Solution, Justification, Utility, Alternatives
  - Regret:** What is the likely counterfactual, and is the counterfactual better or worse than the SQ
  - Actor:** What are the main interests of the actor, where is the interest better served
  - Analysis:** varies
- **Rule of Thumb:** try and strip the motion off of its specific terms, and substitute them for generic ones
- **Practice:** THBT states should prioritize bilateral trade deals over large regional trade deals such as the TPP and RCEP

# Analogies

- Use first principles to understand what other debates this motion is similar to, that you might be more familiar with
- Ask yourself what **is** and what **isn't** similar
- Use the analogy to help you analyze, but don't analyze the analogy
- **Example:** THW ban members in the Sri Lanka military and the Tamil Tigers from running for elections
- **Practice:** ASEAN is an economic union of states in southeast Asia. TH, as ASEAN, would suspend Myanmar's membership



# Definitions and Models for the Ignorant Debater

- Give a simple and basic definition. This is not the time for motion breakers
- Think of other things the motion might be similar to
- Take clarifications and take time to answer them
- If you were challenged – play along
- Don't rely on your definition too much in your case
- **Example:** THBT White Feminism did more harm than good
- **Practice:** THS the rise of computational creativity