

Resolution of Risk

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Resolutions in argumentation have typically been interpreted as either being fact, value or policy. The aforementioned approaches assume that rhetors must argue along only three rigid tracks. However, neo-rhetors - those who are now debating fact resolutions and other topics - are rarely analyzing propositions as simple as, "War is bad." Fact resolutions typically are currently going further, stating a certain "war is bad." These new propositions bring about the question, "Is there a greater risk of stopping the war versus continuing the war?" What's more, typically there is an implied risk in these so called fact resolutions that is something unstated or left to be proven. These so called policy and value resolutions follow this same line of implied logic when they ask if we "should" do something or suggest that one need is greater than another.

What's more, neo-rhetors on the affirmative and negative face off armed with a topic that is built around a problem, policy or point that the framers of the resolution, and maybe even the critic have in mind: A certain war is bad? We should not be in this war? Life is more important than power? All of these aforementioned questions and statements place a burden on the neo-rhetors in varying debate formats to meet and exceed expectations. Randy Barnett said the framers are wardens, designers and architects. [1] Meanwhile, The Rostrum firmly establishes the critic or judge as an "army of one." [2] Combining the approach of the judge and the framer means that not meeting the expectations of the two may be a mistake that could cost the neo-rhetor the round of competition. It is also core to argumentation to use logos to meet and exceed a critic's expectation. [3]

This paper explores how applying a more critical theory to resolutions can better debate through evaluating propositions as Resolutions of Risk. A Resolution of Risk, is any proposition that assumes an implied risk that is good or bad to individuals, groups, organizations or countries. In some forms of debate, these resolutions are typically more hybrid fact/policy resolutions, with a compound predictive function - or an element of an implied risk. These resolutions, which often do not contain the word should, assume some imminent policy - and sometimes individual action - that has not been accepted as fact. This paper discusses how neo-rhetors, who are advocating on the affirmative or negative, may approach these trends in debate and how to argue Resolutions of Risk in the growing world of the International Public Debate Association.

I. The Affirmative

The affirmative, those who advocate for change, have always had real challenges as it relates to winning a critics ballot. From the moment the neo-rhetor is handed the topic, their first thought must and should be, "What did the framers intend and what can I do to win the competition?" The very nature of debate is that a critic ultimately determines what is 'factual' based on the strength of one's advocacy. It is true, the Affirmative has many burdens: topicality, solvency, significance, harms and inherency. Still, before all of the aforementioned burdens must come adherence to the framers intent. Clearly stated, for the affirmative to win the round the message that they are sending is one that must be connected in some way to the resolution, which goes beyond topicality

and enters the realm of logoi. Resolution of Risk analysis is argumentation at its core. Argumentation or logic has always worked along with topicality in its importance, because if the preconditions of the framers and critics are not met prior to reading the completed plan in the round, there may be a loss of logoi. This is debatably why more cases pass the topicality threshold. These neo-rhetors have moved the debate forward in the mind of the critic and framer.

Thus, the neo-rhetor can establish strong logoi and build ethos and pathos by making sure that the proper way of arguing is selected or advanced beyond the topic. Again, fact resolutions rarely state, "War is good." War-focused resolutions typically state that a specific war is good so it is incumbent on the neo-rhetor to make sure they cover the angle that began the war in the first place. It is also imperative that the affirmative make sure that they approach policy in the same way. In short, they must make sure they solve policy resolutions and not make matters worse. What's more, value resolutions must be evaluated from what brought the framer to write, "Love is greater than war." Affirmatives should ask, "What is the risk of love over war or war over love?" All of the angles of a resolution must be satisfied in a critical analysis of all of the possible problems and solutions of any plan - if one is to be presented - beforehand. The biggest voting issue in a competition is often when there is a disconnect between the critical and the competitors, because the critic feels as if points are not properly understood or explained.

II. The Negative

Resolution of Risk provides negative neo-rhetors with an additional argument. Kritiks, counterplans and spec arguments are more recent ways of challenging affirmatives arguments - but only after affirmatives have met the fundamental burdens of the resolution. In contrast, the Resolution of Risk approach to debate offers a more critical analysis in argumentation.

Resolution of Risk for the negative, is about challenging the opposition's logoi. The very approach to the traditional fact, policy, or value approach is under scrutiny. What's more, the methods used within the affirmatives argumentation - which may include solvency, significance, harms - are all in question.

In the "War is bad" example, the first argument, for negatives using the Resolution of Risk, is that this is not yet a fact. If the proposition says that the country should not enter this certain war, from a policy perspective, then the question becomes, "What are the risk that we are actually going to enter the war?" or arguing that not entering the war may actually make things worse. If a value is being upheld then Resolution of Risk can challenge the value as being what the risk of the said value will be compromised. The aforementioned approach offers deeper theoretical arguments to the proposition and also question the traditional approach to taking the proposition as being fact, policy, or value based. What's more, these types of arguments can become winning issues when they are impacted properly.

During a review of this paper's concept for publication, Bossier Parish Community College Director of Forensics Bob Alexander wrote: "From a negative perspective, the resolution of risk provides an additional avenue of attack. In addition to traditional value hierarchy attacks upon the assumptions of advocacy and the disadvantage, counterplan, etc. levels of attack upon policy advocacy, the negative now has the opportunity to question whether the risk is significant enough. In questioning

whether the risk is sufficient enough, the negative is not placed into a scenario of defending the status quo or counterplaning, but instead has the opportunity to recognize that a problem may exist but that the risk of harm (i.e. 'impending economic collapse') is not significant enough to justify adoption of a policy framework without specific policy analysis (i.e. 'we should not adopt a \$700 billion blank check, but instead should consider multiple direct packages')."

There are also other implications that the Resolutions of Risk points out, as it relates to the International Public Debate Association community. IPDA's hybrid resolutions are asking questions that are not policy or not yet fact before lay judges who can be given real world lessons in argumentation by the neo-rhetor. The argument being that the affirmative addressing the proposition as a Resolutions of Risk is mandatory because there are certain implied issues raised by the framer that must be addressed to uphold logos in the round.

III. How to argue a Risk Resolution, when faced with hybrid fact/policy propositions?

In IPDA, Resolutions of Risk are sometimes hybrid fact/policy resolutions, with a compound predictive function - or an element of an implied risk. These resolutions, which do not contain the word should, assume some imminent policy - and sometimes individual action - that has not been accepted as fact.

Before we go further lets define some terms:

Imminent: Close in time; about to occur; "retribution is at hand"; "some people believe the day of judgment is close at hand"; "in imminent danger"; "his impending retirement." [4]

Policy: A line of argument rationalizing the course of action of a government; "they debated the policy or impolicy of the proposed legislation." [5]

Fact: A piece of information about circumstances that exist or events that have occurred. [6]

What's more, these IPDA Resolutions of Risk use words like "will" or "won't"; "has" or "hasn't"; "can" or "cannot," when none of these have happened yet. These Resolutions of Risk are only looming, theorized or reported. They are, or may be, imminent and are not yet policy or fact. They are based on pure speculation.

Here are a few examples of past IPDA topics and suggestions of how to apply Resolutions of Risk:

Example 1:

"Universal health care will cause the Democrats to lose."

This resolution appeared at an International Public Debate Association tournament in the fall of 2007. Some IPDA affirmatives were forced to argue the risk that is implied based on current policy. Debaters could either say this is a good or bad thing and argue the harms and or advantages that result.

Affirmative arguments:

Step 1: They would label the proposition as a Resolution of Risk and attempt to prove that the Democrats will lose due to Universal Health Care.

Step 2: They would then have to appeal to the judge to vote for them and to reject any risk of the stated implied harms or advantages as a result of that loss – thus adhering to the framer's intent.

Negative argument:

The negative would have to counter the core resolution by stating that this is a Resolutions of Risk and charge the affirmative with not using proper logos and violating the framer's intent. With the type of resolution that is being debated firmly established, the negative would then seek to prove that other things may be more of a risk to the Democrats losing.

Example 2:

Affirmative arguments:

The Resolutions of Risk is just as useful when referring to a person. This is evidenced by a second resolution taken from the same tournament:

"T.O. is going to be KO'd this year."

Step 1: They would label the proposition as a Resolution of Risk and prove that the T.O. will get "KO'd."

Step 2: They would then have to appeal to the judge to vote for them and reject any risk of the implied harms or advantages as a result of that outcome – again adhering to the framer's intent.

Negative argument:

The negative would have to counter the core resolution by stating that this is a Resolutions of Risk and charge the affirmative with not using proper logos and violating the framer's intent. With the type of resolution that is being debated firmly established, the negative would then seek to counter that other things lead to the players losing.

In conclusion, resolutions in argumentation have typically been interpreted as either being fact, value or policy. As the entire debate community increasingly engages more complex resolutions, neo-rehetors will continue to look for more innovative ways to argue. The Resolution of Risk approach provides a more critical analysis of these complex propositions while improving the level of argumentation, and providing serious potential for future development of the theory. In closing, the Resolution of Risk puts the entire debate community on a path back to logic and presents an opportunity for the community to rethink traditional approaches.