

team can win their argument that the U.N. violates human rights in Kosovo and also can prove that the U.N. is guided by motives other than the protection of human rights, then the team can demonstrate not only an example of human rights abuse by the U.N. but also why such abuses occur. Reasoning of this type is very powerful because the support for the argument is multi-layered, thus the opposition will have difficulty refuting it.

- 4. Determine the overall impact of an argument.** An effective rebuttal speaker must examine each argument, asking: So what? Why is the argument vital to the debate? This is the easiest and perhaps most effective method in deciding the relative merit of a particular argument.

These four steps will help you assess the *impact* of an argument—the effect it has on the outcome of the debate. Common criteria for assessing an impact when debating a policy proposition include: the magnitude of the harm, the time frame within which the harm will occur, the risk or the likelihood of the harm, and the type of impact (i.e., if the harm occurs once or if it is systemic, ongoing harm). Of course, these criteria are also debatable. For example, one side may argue that the U.N. could address human rights problems in Papua New Guinea (PNG), but the opposing team could argue that using the U.N. is unwise given the U.N.'s history of violating human rights. The opposing team will weigh the impact of using the U.N. (which violates human rights) versus the impact of the human rights violations occurring in PNG. Comparing the relative impact of these arguments enables the rebuttal speaker to determine whether the argument is vital. Assessing the impact is only one way to determine whether an argument is vital. A debater might also question the causal quality of the link to the argument (e.g., the U.N. does not violate human rights, but its affiliated agencies do). Regardless of the method used, the rebuttal speaker must identify the vital issues so the judge can compare and contrast them.

MAKING CHOICES

Once the rebuttal speaker has determined the vital issues in the debate, she must choose which arguments to advance. In making the determination, the debater should consider:

- 1. Time constraints.** Because of time limitations, rebuttalists should present their most important arguments first. If time remains, they can present other arguments in order of significance.
- 2. Issue constraints.** Even if time permits discussion of most of the arguments, a rebuttalist may be choosing poorly by highlighting all of them. Some issues by their nature deserve more attention than others, particularly given the context of a specific debate round. Think about how emphasizing one issue relates to the other issues. If emphasizing one detracts from the value of another, then you may need to make a choice about which one to advance during the rebuttal.
- 3. Judge preferences.** Choose arguments with the judge's preferences in mind. For example, if the judge is known to dislike objections to truism argu-