Affirmative Case: Human Well-being

Living in America, we’re used to only thinking of national security in terms of jihadist terrorism and TSA pat downs. But looking outside of our country to the other 200, security has always meant something much larger. In the real world, we can only trust security as long as the agent that provides it is worthy of our trust. And it’s because I don’t trust the government that I’m confident in affirming today’s resolution: *When in conflict, the right to individual privacy is more important than national security.*

Let’s start with definitions:

* Privacy will be defined by the Oxford Dictionary as: “The state or condition of being free from being observed or disturbed by other people.” [1]
* National Security will be defined by the MacMillan Dictionary as: “The protection or the safety of a country’s secrets and its citizens.” [2]

We’re going to kick off the affirmative case with a

# Super Value: Pragmatism

A super value is a lense to use before we evaluate other values. Think of it as a mindset for the resolution.

In this round, we should use the super value of pragmatism. This argues that we judge concepts like privacy and security based on how they work in the real world, as opposed to how people *think* they should work.

For example, even though lots of socialists would argue that socialism ideally is a good thing, we don’t support socialism because of its disastrous consequences. In the real world, it fails, and so socialism is a bad idea. That’s pragmatism! We don’t live in a utopia, so we shouldn’t pretend to debate in one.

## Res Analysis: Security is Fluid

Thirty years ago, no one would not think twice about an unattended suitcase in an airport. Now, leave your luggage by itself to use the bathroom, and you’ll probably walk out of the airport in a pair of handcuffs. This is because national security is and has always been based on the government’s perception. Different governments throughout history have had different perceptions. Japan, for instance, is okay with immigration today, but travel back 200 years and foreign immigration was seen as such a security threat that it was almost entirely banned.[3] Because security is such a fluid concept, we must look to governments to see which way the river flows.

Knowing how to look at the resolution, let’s talk about how we measure it.

# Value: Human Well-being

The value for the debate round is Human Well-being, operationally defined as “the health and prosperity of a society.” The reason we should choose this value lies in the

## Value Link: Robust Standard

Because the government is given a choice between privacy and security, they have to be given a standard to make that choice. That’s what human well-being provides. Because it is such a broad value, it can encompass a guide for all government policies: Governments should always act in such a way to better their citizens’ lives.

# Contention 1: Valuing Privacy Increases Well-being

At its core, privacy represents respect. Granting a right to it means that a government has to honor the autonomy of their people by not overstepping into their personal lives. All relationships, whether they’re of a friend to a friend, or a citizen to the state, are built on relational trust. Without boundaries, this collapses.

## Application: Religious Freedom

Having privacy means we get to make private decisions about what we believe. And nowhere is that more relevant than in religious freedom.

Let’s be honest: With 7 billion people and counting, there’s going to be a lot of ideological conflict. The best way to handle this is not to suppress or silence differences of opinion, but allow them to be chosen by individuals. This can only exist with a right to make free, private decisions.

Fortunately, the First Amendment affirms this by giving each person the right to make religious decisions on his or her own. And as a result, humanity benefits.

# Contention 2: Valuing Security Destroys Well-being

Let’s not forget: Security is only determined by government values. To be secure is to be free from threat—and it’s the state that determines what that threat is. To illustrate how destructive this consequence is, I’m going to offer you a series of real world applications.

## Application 1: China

In the 20th century, China’s government was led by an old chap named Mao Zedong. Like many other leaders in history, Mao wasn’t exactly what we call *pro-freedom*. His ideas of security were very simple: Anyone who was in favor of Christianity or capitalism was a threat to the state. Because Mao’s government considered free thought a threat to national security, all who thought differently were quickly and lethally “taken care of”. [4]

## Application 2: Rome

Travelling back from the 20th century to the 1st, we find that governments have hardly changed. The Roman Emperor Nero was famous for his position on national security: That anyone with different opinions threatened the stability of the nation. As a result, he had myriads of Christians tortured and executed on behalf of the state. [5] It shouldn’t surprise us that when governments have to decide what kind of security they want, and don’t levy a budget for human rights, that human well-being gets entirely ignored.

## Application 3: Great Britain

America is unique in that it was one of the first nations to place rights, such as privacy, as a stipulation for pursuing safety. That national security can only be pursued insofar as it does not encroach the rights of individuals.

It’s no wonder, because America’s ideologies stem from an aversion to their origins. Great Britain didn’t view private, individual expressions of religion as a positive thing. As history tells us, they viewed a religious belief in conflict with their own as a danger to everyone else. Consequently, they attempted to suppress it, and the American Revolution was born.

Like most governments pre-America, freedom of thought was seen as a threat to the state. This reality of valuing security is appropriately unsettling, because unless governments pursue safety after they respect rights, then they’re unlikely to create a world that benefits humanity. Security has a fluid nature, and empirically, it’s always flowed south.

If we’re inclined to only place our heads beneath modern American sand, governments are decent. Sure, they have failures. Occasionally, they’ll spy on their citizens. At other times, they’ll punish you for not buying “free” healthcare. But by and large, they’re doing all right. They ward off enemies, they win wars, and they allow us to be generally free.

Unfortunately, the modern American sand only has enough room for 330 million heads. Which is surprising, considering that roughly the same number have been chopped off by governments in the 20th century alone. [6]

When you look at the state both globally and historically, ours becomes a minuscule exception. There have been thousands of governments throughout history, and when nearly all of them end in abuse, it’s hard to be surprised at their abysmal track record.

To be frank, I don’t trust the government. And that’s why I’m proud to affirm today’s resolution.

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*This case was written by Joseph Abell.*

# Works Cited:

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