Prevention  
Affirmative Case by Mark Csoros



This case requires you to do three things: stay on message, be logical, and be real-world. Let’s walk through the case, and then I’ll tell you what I mean.

Your value is human life, but with a slight qualification. Since every government is responsible to its citizens first, your value is reflective of that priority. Your criterion is prevention, and it links in pretty simply: avoiding problems, or solving problems before they grow, is an easy way to save lives. Your contentions follow a simple pattern: action is needed, not acting is wrong, and therefore the resolution is correct. Your applications are under the first two contentions, and they illustrate the benefits of preventative action, and the problems with failing to act.

Your main job is to stick to your message. You need to make prevention the watchword of the round. If you can sell the judge on why problems are worth avoiding or limiting, you’ve sold them on your principle. In the NEG summary, I’m telling your opponent to destroy your narrative. So be warned. Like winter, NEG is coming. Defend your thesis.

Secondly, be logical. This is a supporting point to staying on message, and it’s imperative. Your entire case rests on the (correct) assumption that preventing problems is good. Your job is to prove the (debatable) assumption that preventing problems with preemptive war won’t start new problems. That shouldn’t be incredibly difficult, but it may be challenging. The logic is fairly straightforward: if you can nip a problem in the bud or avoid it altogether, life will be easier. That’s the way real life works.

Third, use the real world to your advantage. By real world, I don’t mean “applications,” I mean everyday scenarios. Driving, walking at night, getting insurance, hiring lawyers, writing wills, all of those are situations where you need to plan ahead. They are all situations where you need to avoid problems. They are all situations that your judge will understand and identify with. So use them. In the real world, we use preemption all the time. Why should we stray from that method? The current system often supports AFF, so make use of it.

Prevention

An old folk proverb says that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” In the realm of politics and conflicts, that saying holds true. It’s always easier to prevent a mess than to clean it up, and it’s always better to avoid a conflict than to have to recover from it. That simple logic is why I stand *Resolved: Preemptive warfare is morally justified.*

Before we get into why that statement is true, we should define some key terms.

# Definitions

**Preemptive:** Cambridge Dictionary writes: *If something is preemptive, it is done before other people can act, especially to prevent them from doing something else.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Warfare:** Merrriam Webster defines warfare as:*an activity undertaken by a political unit (such as a nation) to weaken or destroy another: economic warfare* **or a** *struggle between competing entities:* conflict*[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Essentially, preemptive warfare is any action taken before conflict to weaken an enemy or rival. Let’s see why we should embrace that practice, starting with the…

# Value: Human Life

The job of all governments is to save life. Of course, each government must prioritize the life of its own citizens, but overall, the reason why we have governments is to keep people safe. We can achieve that through the…

## Criterion: Prevention

Prevention means that we should actively seek to avoid problems rather than passively wait for them to come. Just like when you drive a car, you look ahead to identify dangers and take action as early as possible to avoid getting into a collision. In the world of geopolitics, we ought to do the same thing.

Let’s see how that plays out in our contentions, starting with…

# Contention 1: Preemption is vital

Countries that preempt conflict are the countries that avoid conflict. Civilized nations have a wealth of tools at their disposal to keep conflict at bay. Trade agreements, alliances, and sanctions are all used to isolate potential threats and make strong bonds with allies. Let’s look at an example in…

## Application 1: North Korean Sanctions

Since the current dictator, Kim Jong Un, has risen to power, North Korea hasn’t been subtle about their intentions. They want a fully functioning nuclear warhead, and they want it as soon as possible. The New York Times reported in April of 2017,

“To reach their goal, North Korean weapons designers are looking to miniaturize their warheads, making them far lighter and more powerful. The big effort these days is to merge two technologies: Get a missile that can cross the Pacific, and marry it to a warhead that can survive the ride. And this is why the United States is so desperate to stop the cycle of testing.[[3]](#footnote-3)”

Obviously, a nuclear armed Kim Jong Un would be a bad thing. We can’t just give North Korea the ability to keep building. So, the United States and the United Nations have responded by sanctioning North Korea. These sanctions are designed to do two things: first, to slow down or stop the weapons testing program by restricting funding, weapons materials, and technology. Second, to make life unpleasant for high ranking officials, by restricting transactions, luxury goods, and electronics.

All of this is because of what we’ll see in…

# Contention 2: Failing to act is unjust

Failing to do the right thing is just as bad as doing the wrong thing. When a government doesn’t step in to stop a conflict, or deal with a threat, it usually has unpleasant repercussions. Let’s look at an example in…

## Application 2: ISIS

Once Seal Team 6 killed Osama bin Laden, and U.S. led coalition forces defeated Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Iraq, we were feeling good about international terrorism. We realized it was still a problem, but we thought we had things under wraps. In 2012, President Obama even referred to various small insurgent groups as “the Jayvee team.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Five short years later, most of those groups have united under a single flag. A black flag, inscribed with Arabic words. Most of those insurgent groups are now a part of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. That’s why we need an affirmative ballot. We once counted ISIS as a threat that we didn’t need to preempt. Five years of death and struggle proves why we need to act, not react.

# Contention 3: Preemptive warfare is just

Taking actions to weaken an enemy isn’t an unfair tactic, it’s common sense. Failing to act results in loss of life and the expansion of problems. These problems come at the cost of human life, and that’s unacceptable. Wise policies see danger approaching, and take steps to limit risks and solve problems. Wise policies center around prevention, and so they save human life. Because preemptive warfare lets us prevent problems from becoming ISIS level problems, I’d ask that you join me in supporting the resolution. Thank you.

Opposing This Case

You have a few options. The first is to take out the case at the definitions level. The common man definition of warfare doesn’t include exercises of “soft power” like sanctions or alliances. I don’t like using common man definitions for two reasons:

a. They usually contradict the dictionary

b. Debate is about becoming uncommon men and women. Is that elitist? Yes, in the sense that excellence is admirable and worth pursuing.

However, I’m not opposed to using common man definitions every once in a while. If you really have nothing better to run, go for the definitions.

The second strategy is to attack the examples themselves. Lots of factors led to ISIS. North Korea is still advancing in their nuclear capacity. If you really think about it, the U.S. invaded Korea (when we weren’t threatened, making it preemptive), made half the peninsula capitalist, and ticked off the North in the process. We also invaded Iraq (preemptively), deposed Saddam Hussein, and left the door open for terror groups to move in. AFF is going to respond by saying that we needed those preemptive wars, because a communist Korean peninsula and another dictator in the Middle East are both bad things. You probably shouldn’t try to win on the argument that Saddam Hussein was a good guy. You should, however, try to win on the fact that jumping headfirst into conflict has bad results.

The third example is just to stay on your ground. Give the judge an alternate way to save lives. Instead of preempting conflict, rushing to war, and getting involved in conflict, take a step back. Show the judge that discretion is the better part of valor. Point out that we ought to look before we leap, presume innocence, and only go to war when it’s absolutely necessary.

Above all, you need to sell your narrative. Don’t let the mantra of prevention take hold in the round. Your thesis and value need to shape the round for the judge, and you need to make your opponent debate on your ground. Pull out all your persuasive tools and tricks, because prevention cannot be the message of this round. Your message needs to be preeminent. Good luck.

1. "Definition of "pre-emptive" - English Dictionary." Cambridge English Dictionary Online. Cambridge Dictionary, n.d. Web. 21 June 2017. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/pre-emptive>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "Warfare." *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 21 June 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/warfare>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sanger, David E., and William J. Broad. "As North Korea Speeds Its Nuclear Program, U.S. Fears Time Will Run Out." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 24 Apr. 2017. Web. 27 July 2017 [*https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-missile-program.html?\_r=1*](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-missile-program.html?_r=1) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. "What Obama Said about Islamic State as a 'JV' Team." Politifact, n.d. Web. 27 July 2017. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2014/sep/07/barack-obama/what-obama-said-about-islamic-state-jv-team/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)