National Security  
Negative Case by Mark Csoros



The essence of this case is capitalizing on the uncertainty inherent in any decision. Predicting the future is, by definition, uncertain, and the affirmative is advocating that we should go to war before we know we need to. Your job is to advocate for a much more measured approach. Portray the affirmative as a trigger-happy warmonger rushing preemptively into advanced conflict. Then, show the consequences of buying into that worldview.

You do that through four contentions. The first one serves as a foundation, and it’s very provable. If you can maintain its link to the rest of your arguments, you can keep coming back to the mantra of “the future isn’t knowable.”

The second contention builds off the first, and extends the magnitude of the consequences of preemptive war. It uses the example of the rise of ISIS in the Middle East and links it to the preemptive war in Iraq that started in 2003. You’ll need to be careful here, because most of your judges will have strong opinions and a fair amount of knowledge about this war. Most competitors weren’t born in 2003, and some of you (like me) have dim memories of hearing bits and pieces of the news from parents in route to karate class. So, read up.

Contention 3 is similar, but different in nuance. While Contention 2 says that we have a hard time predicting the future, Contention 3 says that we have a precedence of failure that proves that preemptive warfare is ineffective. C2 looks forward and says “who knows,” C3 looks back and says, “I do: preemptive warfare is bad.” It uses the example of Japan and outlines how Pearl Harbor landed the Japanese in a world of trouble. If you want additional support about how China is a threat and Japan’s weaponry is inadequate, just do some googling. There’s plenty of advocacy that wouldn’t fit into a Negative Constructive, but the work may help with rebuttals.

Contention 4 is a conclusion and wrap-up. It ties it back to the value and has some persuasive rhetoric. I find that having a “taggable” closing works better than bare rhetoric. Flow judges usually ignore rhetoric and love tags, so it helps to make your closing a contention.

Mainly, keep coming back to the fact that we can’t know the future, but we can judge based on the past. In the past, preemptive warfare has failed miserably, because bureaucrats thought they could predict what was going to happen in the future. So, to make sure our future is bright, learn from the past, don’t try to predict the future, and avoid voting for the resolution.

National Security

2014 marked the 50th anniversary of one of the best satirical films of all time: *Dr. Strangelove[[1]](#footnote-1)*. The film centers around an apocalyptic scenario: an American general launches a preemptive strike against Russia at the height of the Cold War. That general, Jack Ripper, assumes he’ll win an easy victory, save America, and end the Cold War. But, unbeknownst to anyone, Russia has created a Doomsday Device that, when triggered by an atomic bomb, will create an explosion that will end the world.

The movie centers around the efforts of the U.S. and Russia to stop a slow-motion train wreck that’s happening all-too-fast. That scenario, though fictitious, tells us something important about the way the world works: no prediction is 100% assured.

As tempting as it seems to push the nuclear button or launch the preemptive strike, voting affirmative doesn’t protect anyone. Because even good intentions go astray, I ask that you reject the resolution, and reject preemptive warfare.

# Value: National Security

Before we get into the contentions, we need something to help us weigh today’s round. Since the primary job of government is the protection of its citizens, **National Security** should be the value. In other words, preemptive warfare’s moral justification should hinge around whether or not preemptive warfare makes citizens safer.

With our value in place, let’s see why preemptive warfare is morally unjustified through a few contentions, the first of which is…

# Contention 1: The future isn’t knowable

Due to limitations on human knowledge, it’s impossible to fully know the future. When we act, we’re forced to predict the effect that our actions will have on the world around us. Unfortunately, much of the time, we predict wrongly, which we’ll see in...

# Contention 2: Preemptive warfare has unintended consequences

Every single one of us, at one time or another, has made a decision that didn’t turn out as intended. Usually the consequences are pretty benign, like a lower GPA, a fender bender, or some awkwardness the next time you see someone. But when nations go to war, the consequences can be extreme. Let’s look at an example in…

## Application 1: Iraq War

In 2003, the conflict that we call the Iraq War started. The war was based on the threat posed by Iraq’s dictator, Saddam Hussein, and the chemical weapons that he possessed[[2]](#footnote-2). Regardless of the reasons for that war, it had to end eventually, and in 2011, the United States military left Iraq.

Behind them, a destabilized and fractured nation was left wondering what came next. Unfortunately, a man named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had an answer. Baghdadi envisioned an Islamic caliphate, under the control of his organization: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Interestingly, ISIS fighters were trained by Saddam Hussein’s former officers, and ISIS leaders networked together in U.S.-run prisons.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Now, we shouldn’t blame any administration for ISIS. Evil will always exist. We should, however, blame the idea of preemptive warfare for helping to facilitate this evil. When we act on predictions, we make mistakes. When we go to war based on predictions, we make big mistakes. Even worse, preemptive warfare is usually ineffective. We’ll see that in…

# Contention 3: Preemptive warfare doesn’t work

Everyone knows that Pearl Harbor was a preemptive attack on the United States, and that it sparked World War II. Everyone also knows that Japan lost, that two cities were destroyed by atomic bombs, and that hundreds of thousands of citizens lost their lives. But a lesser-known fact, with even more profound implications, is that Japan is still dealing with the repercussions of Pearl Harbor. *The Atlantic* wrote in 2012:

With a single sentence, Article 9 of the Japanese constitution turned Japan into a pacifist country. “The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” Written by Americans and signed by Japan in 1947, the constitution forbids the island nation from maintaining a military…In the place of armed forces were “self-defense forces”, an organization of essentially civil servants armed with defensive weapons.*[[4]](#footnote-4)*

One preemptive strike cost Japan the ability to go to war. What’s more, their defensive weapons aren’t enough. Japan is threatened by an ever-expanding China.[[5]](#footnote-5) North Korea’s nuclear capacity is expanding by the day. And Japan has to rely on other nations to serve as its warriors.

All this leads to…

# Contention 4: Preemptive warfare is immoral

Governments have a moral obligation to their people. That obligation isn’t to rush into conflict and it isn’t to harm its people. It’s to uphold national security.

Preemptive warfare is morally problematic because it harms the very citizens it’s designed to protect. If nations want to remain secure, they need to reject the resolution. Thank you.

Opposing This Case

Maybe the best way to beat this case it to ask the “what if” question to all of the applications. What if we didn’t invade Iraq? What if Japan didn’t sign that constitution? Does NEG want Saddam Hussein in power? Does NEG want an armed Japan trying to reclaim national honor in the 1950s or 1960s? Seen in that light, preemptive warfare actually worked out really well.

The next way to beat this case is to focus on Contention 1 and 2. Of course there are unintended consequences to actions. Of course things go wrong. But we can’t be paralyzed into inaction because of hypotheticals. Otherwise, we would never pass laws, go to war, or get out of bed. We have to take calculated risks, and preemptive warfare is one of those risks. Just prove how preemptive war is effective and is needed.

You can also weigh the disadvantages of the NEG applications, and you can probably win at least one. ISIS is bad and scary, but they probably would have risen regardless of what we did in Iraq. China may pose a threat to Japan, but it also poses a threat to every other country, regardless of pacifist constitutions. Also, Japan is still on the map, and has been for 70 odd years, even with a pacifist constitution. Make NEG prove the problem.

Overall, remind the judge that there are legitimate reasons to strike first. Yeah, it doesn’t always work. Sure, lives are going to be lost. But we strike first to save lives, to protect our people, and to defend our values. That outweighs the minor epistemological concerns of the NEG.

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2. Daalder, Ivo H., and James Lindsay. "The Preemptive-War Doctrine Has Met an Early Death in Iraq" *Brookings* *Institute*, 30 May 2004. Web. 21 June 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-preemptive-war-doctrine-has-met-an-early-death-in-iraq/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hanna, Jason. "Here's How ISIS Was Really Founded." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 13 Aug. 2016. Web. 15 July 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/12/middleeast/here-is-how-isis-began/index.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mizokami, Kyle. "Japan and the U.S.: It's Time to Rethink Your Relationship." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 27 Sept. 2012. Web. 15 July 2017. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/09/japan-and-the-us-its-time-to-rethink-your-relationship/262916/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Shimodaira, Takuya, Simon Serfaty, Brent Ziarnick, and Milton Ezrati. "Why the South China Sea Needs Japan's Navy." *The National Interest*. The Center for the National Interest, Feb. 2016. Web. 15 July 2017. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-the-south-china-sea-needs-japans-navy-15083>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)