The Proof of the Pudding  
Affirmative Case by Mark Csoros



To pre-prep your mind for this case, think about the following line of CX (which you may want to use).

* AFF: Is it moral for the government to kill me?
* NEG: No
* AFF: Then is killing immoral?
* NEG: Yes
* AFF: What if I killed 27 people? Would it then be acceptable to kill me?
* NEG: Yes (assuming they don’t hate the death penalty)
* AFF: So killing is morally acceptable?
* NEG: In some situations

That exchange is the basis of your Aff case. You need to prove that while preemptive warfare can be harmful, ineffective, immoral, and ill-advised, it is still a moral option *for some situations.* Therefore, preemptive warfare, as a concept, is morally justified.

Here’s the walkthrough for that. First, set things up with your definitions, value, and resolutional analysis. I don’t define “morally justified” here, because defining moral justification always devolves into a list of approved and disapproved actions, which just wastes debate time. In addition, this case doesn’t rely on the value or criterion, beyond framing purposes. The only potential argument that can unseat your value/criterion pairing is an anthropocentric one. Neg could argue that the best way to preserve life is for all governments to value all life equally. Your response is simple: that doesn’t work. No nation can equally value the life of its citizens and the lives of an enemy nation’s citizens. War doesn’t work that way. If Neg decides to pull that trick, flick the argument in CX and your 1AR, and move on to the important arguments.

The important arguments will be about the underlying framework of the round, and about the way your contentions operate inside that framework. Because preemptive warfare is acceptable in some situations, it is a morally acceptable action. To prove that, set up the round, run your contentions, and respond in CX by staying on your ground. Use your CX to establish that morality is heavily dependent on the situation. Then, in your rebuttal, keep returning to this dictum: an immoral action is never acceptable. Moral actions are moral in some circumstances, and not in others. Of course, we won’t use preemptive warfare all the time, but it’s still moral, because it is appropriate under some circumstances. For real life applications, feel free to use any that you find fitting. I have a soft spot for Ronald Reagan’s invasion of Grenada, and for Israel’s Six Days War, but don’t get lost with too many examples. The meat of this case is in the logic, so be sure to lock that in and impact all round.

The Proof of the Pudding

Epistemology is one of the most interesting branches of philosophy. Epistemology is the study of knowledge, and its most basic question is: “How do we know what we know?” Depending on who answers that question, you might find several different answers, but one of the most practical answers is an old English saying: the proof of the pudding is in the eating. In other words, we know the pudding is real because we went through the process of eating it. That’s a perfect analogy for this resolution.

I’m **Resolved:** that **Preemptive warfare is morally justified**, and I believe that for a very simple reason. Preemptive warfare is an option. The fact that it we’re debating it means that preemptive warfare is morally justified. Before we get into exactly why that’s so, we need to define some important 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:** Merriam Webster defines warfare as: *an activity undertaken by a political unit (such as a nation) to weaken or destroy another.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

So, when assembled together, preemptive warfare is the weakening or destruction of another nation before that nation can act. This weakening or destruction is usually in order to prevent something else from occurring.

## Resolutional Analysis

With that established, we need to determine the perspective from which we’ll examine today’s debate, and we’ll do that through our *Resolutional Analysis: Government actor.* Since we’re debating about war, and since (for the most part) only governments engage in war, it makes sense to view this resolution from the perspective of a government body.

# Value: Human Life

Now we need a way to determine whether preemptive warfare is justified. To help measure both sides of the resolution, I present the *Value: Human Life.*All this means is that the winner of today’s round should be the side that best protects humans from threats. That seems a little too obvious, so let’s narrow it down a bit through our Criterion.

## Criterion: Popular Representation

The Criterion is just the way that we can achieve the value, and the Criterion of this round should be *Popular Representation.*Now, in this round, popular representation doesn’t have anything to do with elections or polls, and it has everything to do with how governments make decisions. A government that represents its people will put their interests first, work to improve their quality of life, and, most importantly, protect their lives. It also means that each government will put their own people first, and not people from other nations. Let’s move to see how this foundational truth about how governments should operate supports the resolution.

# Contention 1: Governments protect citizens

We talked about this in the value, but it’s worth restating. The essence of the Social Contract is that we give up some things in order to be protected. We pay taxes, obey laws, and respect authority, and in exchange, we receive protection from the harm that other nations might cause us.

# Contention 2: Debate implies relevance

In general, we try to avoid debating about pointless things. We’re debating about preemptive warfare because we may be in a situation where we have to decide whether or not to preemptively strike. And when we’re in that situation, the one that we’re trying to solve ahead of time with this debate, we need to remember our next contention…

# Contention 3: Options on the table

When we, acting as a government have to decide whether or not to go to war preemptively, we may choose not to. We may decide that the only moral course of action, in our particular situation, is to wait to be attacked first. But notice the defining term there: “in our situation.” There are situations that don’t call for preemptive warfare, and in those situations it would be immoral to use it. But those situations don’t disprove the morality of preemptive war. We shouldn’t preemptively declare preemptive war immoral, we may need to use it. Let’s look at a simple example of this concept in…

## Application 1: Fighting

There are some situations where it’s improper and immoral to engage in physical conflict with another human being. In general, you don’t box in church, wrestle in a court of law, or (with very few exceptions) brawl in the middle of a wedding. But, fighting isn’t something inherently immoral. In fact, some situations require fighting, and we would call someone immoral if they refused to fight at the appropriate time. An Olympic wrestler who didn’t compete when his country expected him to is arguably less moral than the cousin who got a little too rowdy at the wedding reception. All this goes to prove that morality of an action is not depended on the number of times you need to use the action. We’ll see why that’s important in…

# Contention 4: Preemptive warfare is morally justified

At the beginning of this speech, I spoke about the old saying “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”. In this debate round, the proof of the resolution is in the debating. If today’s debate was about something truly immoral, like slavery or genocide or legalizing theft, I would lose, because in today’s world there is never an occasion for those things. Those debates are over. But we can debate about the morality of preemptive warfare because we know that there are occasions to use it. We know that some threats can only be allayed by swift, powerful, preemptive action. Not every situation calls for it, and we should rarely use it. But it should always be an option, and it always is an option, because preemptive warfare is morally justified.

Opposing This Case

This affirmative case is vulnerable in two ways: first, it sets a low bar for affirmative. “Because it’s not immoral, it’s moral,” and “because we may need it, it’s moral” are the foundational ideas behind this case. Second, it logically exploits the resolution and doesn’t really make use of a value or real-world applications.

To beat this case, start by redefining how the round is supposed to work. If Aff can convince the judge that morality rests on debatability and not individual situations, you’re going to have a tough round. You need to steer the debate away from hypotheticals and towards the real world. Conceptually, preemptive warfare may be fine, but is that really the case historically? Can Aff prove a legitimate example? If it isn’t justified in the real world, we shouldn’t justify it in a debate round.

Second, fall back on your preestablished value and applications. If you have a strong narrative, you can unseat the Aff narrative. Spend some time establishing that all lives have importance, and so governments can’t look to the good of their own citizens alone. Show how horribly amuck preemptive warfare can go. Point out that preemptive warfare may be an ineffective way to protect even the citizens of the country using preemptive war. It didn’t really work out for Hitler’s Germany or Emperor Hirohito’s Japan. If governments casually adopt bad policies against the lessons of history, are they acting morally? Your answer should be no, and you should be prepared to prove with evidence why that’s so.

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)