Governmental Legitimacy  
 Affirmative Case by Mark Csoros



This case is centered about a big application: Israel’s Six Days War of 1967. That war is your bread and butter. If you want to defend this case after the AC, you need to keep circling back to this war. Point out the existential threats to Israel, the effectiveness of the preemptive strike, and the stable aftermath. Use it to illustrate how certain we can be about the threats that face a nation. Over and over and over, link the Six Days War to your side of the resolution, and then link it to your value.

That value is governmental legitimacy, and it’s defined somewhat narrowly. Through the criterion of threat defense, the operational standard for a legitimate government is its ability to defend against outside threats. Now, it’s entirely possible for an illegitimate government to have really good security, and there is obviously more to legitimacy than threat defense. However, in this resolution, there simply isn’t the opportunity to talk about governmental legitimacy that comes from having good infrastructure, or a sound voting process, or a respect for civil liberties. Those are important aspects. But when we’re dealing with preemptive warfare, legitimacy is mostly measured by the government’s ability to protect the people.

Your contentions follow a pretty logical “pro me, con them, pro over con” format. In your first contention, the big attraction is Israel’s crushing underdog victory, and how it helped maintain the safety of Israelis, upheld the Israeli government’s legitimacy, and made the world a better place. Your second contention centers around a “what if”: what if Israel didn’t preemptively strike? Simple logic says that Israel would have a harder time fighting back if they chose not to preemptively go to war, and that logic is backed up by a current Israeli diplomat, Michael A. Oren. Your third contention is the sum of the previous parts: if the government’s job is protection, and preemption works better than passively waiting to be attacked, then the government has a moral obligation to use preemptive warfare.

Overall, you have an interesting line to walk between necessity and moral obligation, two things that aren’t usually upheld together. But intuitively, your side makes a lot of sense. The government has an obligation to us, and acting preemptively in times of necessity fulfills that obligation. If you can effectively couple that idea with its real-life applications and communicate the whole package to the judge, you will win a lot of affirmative rounds.

Government Legitimacy

Ronald Reagan once said: *Government’s first duty is to protect the people.[[1]](#footnote-1)* He is right. Foundationally, the job the government is to care for the health and well-being of the citizens who live under its flag. Because the job of government requires that it act proactively, I stand **Resolved: Preemptive warfare is morally justified.**

# Definitions

Before we examine why it is justified, let’s define a few key terms.

**Preemptive:** Cambridge Dictionary writes: *If something is preemptive, it is done before other people can act, especially to prevent them from doing something else.*[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Warfare:** Merriam Webster defines warfare as: *an activity undertaken by a political unit (such as a nation) to weaken or destroy another.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

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.

# Value/Criterion

Now that our definitions are in place, we need a way to determine whether preemptive warfare is justified. To help measure both sides of the resolution, I present the **Value: Governmental Legitimacy.** All this means is that the winner of today’s round should be the side that best fulfills the purpose of government. As we already saw, the purpose of a government is to protect its people, so the best way to determine the legitimacy of a government is through the **Criterion** of **Threat Protection**. If a government is protecting its citizens from exterior threats, it’s accomplishing the most important part of its task. Let’s see how affirming the resolution protects against threats and upholds the value of governmental legitimacy, through our contentions.

# Contention 1: Preemptive warfare reduces threats

By definition, preemptive warfare is designed to weaken or destroy another nation before that nation has a chance to strike. Preemptive warfare means proactive protection, and that keeps citizens safe.

Let’s look at an example with…

## Application 1: Six Days War

In 1967, the nation of Israel was in a tight situation. All around it, Arab nations were making allegiances, moving troops toward Israel, and making speeches about wiping Israel off the face of the earth.[[4]](#footnote-4)

So, on June 5th, 1967, Israeli forces struck first. They destroyed most of the Egyptian air force in a pre-dawn strike, then moved on to the Jordanian and Syrian airbases. Aggressive troop movements followed, allowing Israel to quadruple its territory and gain control of strategic regions. After six days, Israel was safe.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Since then, no coalition has attempted to annihilate Israel, because the world bore witness that Israeli forces aren’t to be trifled with. Egypt and Syria signed peace treaties with Israel, and Jordan mended its Israeli ties.[[6]](#footnote-6) Israel’s citizens are safer because of their government’s willingness to use preemptive warfare.

Let’s look at the alternative in…

Contention 2: Failure to preempt is a failure to protect

Michael B.Oren, Israel’s Deputy Minister of Diplomacy, wrote about an alternative ending to the Six Days War. He writes:

“No peace process, no U.S.-Israel alliance, no resurgence of Jewish identity, and no hope for Soviet Jews – these are just a several of the possible consequences of the Six-Day War had its outcome been different. Fortunately, it was Israel’s air force that destroyed Egypt’s and Israeli troops that captured the Sinai Peninsula, Jordan and Syria did attack Israel but were quickly driven from the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Preemptive warfare works. Failing to use it means failing to protect against threats, and failing the Value of governmental legitimacy. If Israel had done nothing, allowed an advancing coalition to keep advancing, and sat on their hands instead of taking action, the nation of Israel might not exist today. In order for a government to protect its people, it must use preemptive warfare.

Let’s see why that’s so important for the debate round in…

# Contention 3: Preemptive warfare is morally justified

Governments are not cold, impersonal defense forces. Governments have a moral obligation to serve and protect their people, and they do that by being proactive. If we have to wait until we’re attacked to fight, we’re already a step behind the game.

Founding father John Jay once wrote: “*Among the many objects to which a wise and free people find it necessary to direct their attention, that of providing for their safety seems to be the first*”.[[8]](#footnote-8) Let’s provide for our safety by affirming government’s duty to use preemptive warfare to protect us.

Opposing This Case

On negative, most of your time on case should be spent de-linking affirmative arguments, and then using your case to remove the persuasive advantage affirmative has. Let’s face it: striking first, before you get hit, sounds like a really good military strategy. Before we get into how to remove the persuasion, let’s cover how to de-link affirmative claims. There are a few ways to go about this:

1. The exception is not the rule. Sure, Israel in 1967 was impressive, but preemptive war doesn’t usually have such clear justifications and such positive results.
2. Israel is still fighting. Palestinians with suicide vests still commit acts of terror, in part because Israel’s preemptive war policy made them really angry.
3. Governmental legitimacy is so much more. Especially if you run it well, some judges will vote on affirmative’s inability to fulfill the burden of the value. In the real world, we don’t narrow our estimation of governmental legitimacy until it just covers military defenses. Why should we narrow it in the round?

As for removing the persuasion, keep a few things in mind.

1. Affirmatives can’t be sure of success. Just because it worked out okay for Israel doesn’t mean preemptive warfare is a sound strategy.
2. Affirmative guarantees lots of people will die. Thousands of Egyptian soldiers died of thirst in the desert, and both sides suffered significant casualties. Is the judge really comfortable with that death rate in other situations, where the justification for preemption is flimsier? Probably not.
3. You have time to weigh impacts. You get a 7-minute constructive that the affirmative has to respond to in 4 minutes. Load up on analysis. Once you delink the affirmative case into an unappetizing jumble of odds and ends—and use your case to kill of any remaining persuasive momentum—sell the judge on your version of the world. Compare the recklessness of preemptive war with the measured approach you bring to the table. Argue that the importance and equality of human life outweighs the old-timey nationalism of the affirmative. Not only can you be the voice of reason in the room, you can be the voice of reason that weighs the arguments against each other, and then presents the findings to the judge. Chances are, your opponent’s 1AR will drop some analysis, and you can capitalize on the ballot.

1. Reagan, Ronald. “Remarks at the national conference of the building and construction trades department, AFL-CIO.” *The American Presidency Project*. 30 Mar. 1981. Web. 8 July 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. "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-2)
3. "Warfare." Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 21 June 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/warfare>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. "Causes, Course and Consequences of the War of 1967." *War of 1967*. Israel & Judaism Studies, n.d. Web. 25 June 2017. <http://www.ijs.org.au/War-of-1967/default.aspx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "1967 Middle East War." *BBC News*. BBC, n.d. Web. 21 June 2017. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/guides/457000/457035/html/nn1page1.stm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Oren, Michael. "Fifty Years since the Six-Day War, Israel Remains the Middle East's Democratic Anchor | Opinion." Newsweek, 08 June 2017. Web. 25 June 2017 <http://www.newsweek.com/six-day-war-transformed-israel-middle-easts-democratic-anchor-620831> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. John Jay, “Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence (cont’d),” *Federalist* No. 3, at [*http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fed03.htm*](http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fed03.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)