vigilant protection  
Affirmative Case by Alexis Dryjanski



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Arguing from the perspective that a government’s basic and most fundamental burden is to protect its people, the objective of this case is to prove that knowing of a credible and imminent threat while not acting is immoral and therefore any option other than preemptively attacking is immoral. Using Safety as its value with a criterion of Vigilant Protection, this case argues that the only morally responsible thing for a government to do when notified of a credible and immediate threat is to *act*.

Vigilant Protection

“The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression. Yet in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world’s most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather.” – National Security Strategy 2002[[1]](#footnote-1)

Because we live in a world with weapons of mass destruction, because we live in a world full of imminent hostilities, because I refuse to stand by while imminent and credible threats come crashing down, I stand resolved that preemptive war is morally justified.

To protect our nation, to protect our people, and to protect our assets, we must accept preemptive warfare as a legitimate and moral strategy.

## Definition

Preemptive Warfare:

“preemptive wars erupt when one state concludes not only that an attack by an adversary is likely but that it is imminent, and that striking first is the best option to deal with this pending aggression. Unlike launching preventive wars, when states choose to attack preemptively they typically must decide and act under severe time constraints. The need to decide quickly whether to attack or absorb a potential blow tends to be a key feature that differentiates preemptive from preventive wars.” – RAND Corporation[[2]](#footnote-2)

## Resolutional Analysis 1: Justified Preemptive Warfare

Preemptive Warfare is a theory and a strategy. Theories and strategies are only morally justified, fair, or right, if they occur in the right scenario. For a Preemptive War to be conceived as potentially justifiable, it must come as a response to a threat that is both credible and imminent, and as such is an act of self-defense. Preemptive Warfare is not justified if the threat is not credible, or if it is not imminent.

We won’t risk lives and international relationships without a credible and imminent risk to our lives and peace.

## Resolutional Analysis 2: 51/49

Building off my first resolutional analysis, theories and strategies aren’t justified in all situations, so as the affirmative I must only prove that in most foreseeable situations, preemptive war is or would be morally justified. The negative has the same standard—they must prove preemptive war is not morally justified in most scenarios.

The impact of this resolution analysis is simply that one scenario does not conclusively prove preemptive war justified or unjustified.

# Value: Safety

Safety is defined by Merriam Webster as “the condition of being safe from undergoing hurt, injury, or loss.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Reason to Prefer: Purpose of Government

“Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government,” –George W. Bush, National Security Strategy 2002[[4]](#footnote-4)

Our Government’s fundamental purpose is to protect its people. A government that doesn’t protect its people does not have its people’s best interest at heart. It is the most fundamental commitment and burden of government. Whether it be by keeping peace and order domestically, protecting our borders, or instituting traffic laws, our government’s purpose is to protect us.

If a government sees an imminent and credible threat, yet doesn’t act—it is willfully allowing the death of its people. Therefore, to preserve safety and to be a legitimate government, it must vigilantly protect its people.

## Criterion: Vigilant Protection

Vigilant is defined by Merriam Webster as, “alertly watchful especially to avoid danger.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Protection is defined as, “to cover or shield from exposure, injury, damage, or destruction.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Therefore, Vigilant Protection is to alertly watch to avoid danger, and then to shield from that danger. We must value the protection and safety of our citizens, and the only way to effectively protect our citizens and ultimately our lives, is to alertly watch for danger and then take care of said danger. Knowing of credible and imminent danger while doing nothing, is not even gambling with people’s lives, it is throwing human lives away.

# Contention 1: Preemptive War Protects

War itself does protect. But preemptive war protects to a higher degree. All wars risk lives and resources to save lives and resources. Preemptive war differs in that rather than waiting for a destructive, life threatening attack to happen; we take information, verify that it’s credible and that the threat is immediate, and then act.

One example is that of the Six Day War. Before we get into my application, it’s important to note that the Six Day War is not a clear-cut example of preemptive warfare. The Six Day War shares many of the key traits of a preemptive war, but it is not the perfect example and there is no perfect example of preemptive warfare in history.

## Application 1: The Six Day War

According to the BBC:

“One example is the Six Day War of 1967. Israel was the first to use military force, when it attacked the Egyptians. Egypt had not used force against Israel, so Israel appeared the aggressor and in the wrong. But Egypt had carried out the following actions before Israel struck:

* announced a policy of hostility to Israel
* put its military forces on maximum alert
* expelled the UN Emergency force from the Sinai border area
* strengthened its forces on the border with Israel
* announced the closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships
* formed mutual support treaties with Iraq, Jordan and Syria”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Israel had credible proof that Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria were all planning to attack them. It was an imminent threat. Rather than waiting for the deaths of their own citizens before acting, Israel decided to act and uphold their duty to their citizens.

According to the Jewish Virtual Library, Israel struck first on June 5th, 1967. Six days later (hence the name), Israel had the upper hand and a cease fire was offered and accepted. Israel lost less than 800 soldiers. Israel’s enemies, however, lost over 18,000 soldiers collectively.

Without this preemptive strike, Israel as we know it would arguably not exist.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Preemptive warfare is not the best choice. War itself, is not the best choice. But when all options are exhausted, when death is imminent, when the threat is immediate—why not prevent it? Standing by when you have credible information on an imminent threat and the resources to prevent it is irresponsibly throwing away human lives. Because I refuse to throw away human lives, I stand resolved that preemptive war is morally justified.

Now, I ask you—will you stand by and watch, or will you act?

Opposing This Case

One way to topple this case is to bring up the four pillars of power—DIME. Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic.

“DIME (diplomacy, information, military and economics) is a recent military term reinvigorated to remind the leadership and policy makers above them to consider national power as not limited to the military power alone. It was because of the political over-use of “M” that led to the push for a “whole-of-government” (WoG) approach within the national security apparatus; and particularly, the DoD.” – In Homeland Security[[9]](#footnote-9)

Many governments seem to have forgotten that diplomacy and information are instruments of power and can accomplish many things. In specifically the case of the Six Day War, they hadn’t exhausted all diplomatic and economic options. Looking at the concept of preemptive war as a whole, one can attack it using the Just War Theory.

According to BBC Ethics,

“A pre-emptive strike can conflict with the doctrine of the just war in two ways:

* it is carried out before the other side attacks with military force, and so appears to make the side carrying out the strike the aggressor
* it is usually carried out before a formal declaration of war”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Building off that, one can argue that preemptive warfare undermines diplomacy by jumping the gun and attacking before adequate time is allowed for negotiation. Beyond that, a key argument could be the standard of credible and imminent. When do we truly have an 100% guarantee? We’ve been fed bad information before. Imagine what would happen if we wasted military power, started a war, and caused human deaths on both sides just because we acted on incorrect information.

One prime example of informational deception occurred in 1991, in the gulf war.

According to the LA Times,

“Decoy missile launchers. Phony weapons factories. "Cratered" runways that are really intact. Iraq may not have impressed the world with its war machine so far, but its military technicians are showing consummate skill at fraud and trickery, according to U.S. military officials. The tactics are all part of the science of deception-- maskorovka-- that the Iraqis learned from their longtime Soviet advisers and honed during eight years of bloody war with Iran. "They're quite good at it," Gen. Colin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a Pentagon news briefing Wednesday. "They have a long history of using dummies to confuse the enemy."”

“In London, British Armed Forces Minister Archie Hamilton said this week that some of the missile launchers that the allies have counted as destroyed may actually have been cardboard and plywood fakes. British military sources have said the Iraqis changed the contours of some buildings to make them appear to be communications centers, factories and chemical weapons plants. A Jordanian security source in Amman recently reported that Iraq was using dummy missiles, complete with equipment that emitted electronic signals designed to fool attacking planes. Iraq's inventory of decoys includes "fake buildings, fake weapons, fake production plants," said Marlin Fitzwater, White House press secretary. "It's a well-known tactic, and they've used it throughout their country."”[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. *National Security Strategy 2002,* <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Striking First: Preemptive and Preventative Attack in US National Security Policy,* <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG403.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Merriam Webster 2017,* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safety> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *National Security Strategy 2002,* <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Merriam Webster 2017,* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vigilant> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Merriam Webster 2017,* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/protects> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *BBC Ethics, Preemptive Strikes,* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/war/just/preemptive.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Six Day War,* <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/background-and-overview-six-day-war> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *In Homeland Security, “Putting the D and I back in DIME,* <https://inhomelandsecurity.com/putting-the-d-and-i-back-in-dime/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *BBC Ethics, http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/war/just/preemptive.shtml* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *LA Times, January 1991,* <http://articles.latimes.com/1991-01-24/news/mn-980_1_decoys-show> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)