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 rez 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 them 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.

Affirmative Case

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**: that **Preventive war is ethical**. Before we get into why that statement is true, we should define one key term.

# Definitions

## Preventive war:

The Hoover Institution says that:

*A preventive war is a military, diplomatic, and strategic endeavor, aimed at an enemy whom one expects to grow so strong that delay would cause defeat.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

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 preservation of human life is the highest possible value we can support. Every other concern is secondary to this one, and so we should make it the goal of any action we take. I believe that affirming the resolution best achieves the value of human life, and it does so through the…

## Criterion: Prevention

Prevention means that we should actively seek to avoid problems rather than passively wait for them to come. When you drive a car, you look ahead to identify dangers, and take action as early as possible to avoid collisions. 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: Prevention is vital

Countries that use preventive warfare are 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.[[2]](#footnote-2)”*

Obviously, a nuclear armed Kim Jong Un would be a bad thing. Obviously, we can’t just give North Korea the ability to keep building. So, the United States, NATO, 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 unethical

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”[[3]](#footnote-3). Five short years later, most of those groups united under a single flag. A black flag inscribed with Arabic. Those insurgent groups formed the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. That’s why we need an affirmative ballot. We once counted ISIS as threat that we didn’t need to preempt. Years of death and struggle proved why we need to act, not react.

# Contention 3: Preventive war is ethical

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 preventive war lets us keep problems from becoming ISIS level problems, I’d ask that you join me in supporting the resolution. Thank you.

Opposition Brief

**Preventive War Lacks Ethical Justifications**

Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews December 2nd, 2013 *“Review of ‘The Ethics of Preventive War’ by Deen K. Chatterjee”; reviewed by Bas van der Vossen*[*https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-ethics-of-preventive-war/*](https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-ethics-of-preventive-war/)

“Preventive war is controversial because it involves military attack in the absence of two commonly accepted justifications: self-defense and so-called preemption. Wars of self-defense are said to be justified (when they are) because they involve countries' responding to (unjust) initiations of military force. Wars of preemption are said to be justified (when they are) because they involve countries' responding to an imminent threat of an (unjust) initiation of force. The rationale for the latter is that one need not wait until unjust aggressors actually initiate their attacks before self-defense becomes permissible.”

**Preventive War Creates Unforeseen Consequences**

The New York Times, August 10th 2014. *"Baghdadi of ISIS Pushes an Islamist Crusade"; by Tim Schmitt and Eric Arango.* [*https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/11/world/middleeast/us-actions-in-iraq-fueled-rise-of-a-rebel.html*](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/11/world/middleeast/us-actions-in-iraq-fueled-rise-of-a-rebel.html)

“But well before then, American actions were critical to Mr. Baghdadi’s rise in more direct ways. He is Iraqi to the core, and his extremist ideology was sharpened and refined in the crucible of the American occupation. The American invasion presented Mr. Baghdadi and his allies with a ready-made enemy and recruiting draw. And the American ouster of Saddam Hussein, whose brutal dictatorship had kept a lid on extremist Islamist movements, gave Mr. Baghdadi the freedom for his radical views to flourish.”

**Preventive War Has High Prerequisites**

The Hoover Institution, August 29th 2017. *“Preemptive Strikes and Preventive Wars: A Historian's Perspective”; by Barry Strauss.* [*www.hoover.org/research/preemptive-strikes-and-preventive-wars-historians-perspective*](http://www.hoover.org/research/preemptive-strikes-and-preventive-wars-historians-perspective)*.*

“To sum up, preventive wars and preemptive strikes work only under certain conditions. If the attacker carries out a brilliant operation, has overwhelming military superiority, is able to mobilize political support particularly at home but also abroad, and is willing to pay a heavy price and bear a long burden in case the war drags on, then one of those two moves might make sense. States lacking those strengths would do best to avoid such risky endeavors.”

**Japan’s Preventive War Backfired**

The Atlantic, September 27 2012. *“Japan and the U.S.: It’s Time to Rethink Your Relationship”; by Kyle Mizokami.* [*http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/09/japan-and-the-us-its-time-to-rethink-your-relationship/262916/&gt*](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/09/japan-and-the-us-its-time-to-rethink-your-relationship/262916/&gt)*;*

“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.”

1. <https://www.hoover.org/research/preemptive-strikes-and-preventive-wars-historians-perspective> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 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-2)
3. "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-3)