

Education Focus:

Debate Committee Panel

Tuesday, June 4, 2019 and Friday, June 7, 2019

Hunt Chapel in Sullivan Hall

Anderson, SC



Value Debate Resolution (Final Wording)

Resolved: Preventive war is ethical.

Overview

Questions about war and what types of warfare are ethical are always relevant in a world that will continue to be at war until God establishes the new heavens and the new earth. In the meantime, Christians would do well to consider under what conditions war is justified. This resolution focuses debaters on one aspect of just warfare: the ethics of preventive war.

Framing the Topic

Before examining the ethics of just war, debaters must examine the differences between preemptive war and preventive war. Preemptive war is a war in which a country declares war on or attacks another country when war is inevitable or imminent. The most obvious example of this is Israel attacking Egypt during the Six-Day War. During this war, it was abundantly clear that Egypt was going to attack Israel imminently, so Israel took the initiative to cripple Egypt and its allies. This form of war is often accepted as justifiable by ethicists.

Determining what constitutes a preventive war is debatable, but the general understanding involves war that is likely but not necessarily imminent.¹ The 2003 Iraq War serves as an example of preventive war. While it turned out that the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) scare was largely exaggerated, the general goal of the war was to stop Saddam Hussein from acquiring WMDs so that he could not ultimately threaten other countries.

Many in the US would favor preventive strikes against North Korea or Iran to halt their nuclear programs.²

Once debaters have solidified their understanding of the key terms, they should research ethical frameworks.

Consequentialism vs. Deontology

The two main schools of ethics thought are consequentialism and deontology. Consequentialism believes that actions are just because of their consequences,³ while deontology believes actions are just because of duties that individuals have.⁴ The line between these schools can blur, but a consequentialist might argue that preventive strikes are necessary because they will stop more damage in the long term. Deontologists may respond by saying that preventive strikes are unjust since the targeted country shouldn't be punished for something it has not yet done. This debate may come down to whether or not the ends justify the means. While many people assume that the ends never justify the means, this issue is hotly contested among ethicists. Consider the assassinations of dictators.

Realists vs. Cosmopolitans

Debaters should consider international ethics frameworks. Mark R. Amstutz addresses international ethics in his book *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics*⁵, and Anne-Marie Slaughter addresses international relations in her article "International Relations, Principal Theories."⁶

When defined correctly, Realists generally believe that countries should focus on protecting themselves⁷ while Cosmopolitans generally believe that countries should care about all citizens regardless of their country of origin.⁸

Is war Justifiable? Debaters should consider what justifies war in the first place. Is self-defense the only justification? Do legitimate humanitarian justifications exist? Michael Walzer addresses these issues in his well-known book *Just and Unjust Wars*.⁹

Strengths

This is a fruitful, well-balanced LD debate topic. But more importantly, as ethics deals with what is morally right and wrong, this is a critical topic for NCFCA debaters as it will provide them with the tools to better engage the world with Christian values and morals within the framework of ethics.

Weaknesses

Because preventive war can be defined in multiple ways, debates could potentially devolve into a clash of definitions. Definitions are critical, but the debate should focus on ethics. Debaters should quickly clarify their definitions and move onto the main part of the debate. More importantly, because ethics is a complex issue, debaters are encouraged to avoid oversimplification of the issues. This would not only damage the depth of debate, but might also cause them to debate the same arguments over and over.

Sources

¹ Van Der Vossen, Bas. Review of *The Ethics of Preventive War*, edited by Deen Chatterjee. 02 Dec 2013. Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews.

<https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-ethics-of-preventive-war/>

² Beinart, Peter. "How America Shed the Taboo Against Preventive War." *The Atlantic*. 21 Apr 2017.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/north-korea-preventive-war/523833/>

³ Haines, William. "Consequentialism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed 20 Mar 2019.

<https://www.iep.utm.edu/conseque/>

⁴ Alexander, Larry and Moore, Michael, "Deontological Ethics." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition, Edward N. Zalta(ed.)),

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-deontological/>

⁵ Amstutz, Marc. *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics*. 23 Feb 2018.

⁶ Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "International Relations, Principal Theories." *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*. 2011.

https://www.princeton.edu/~slaughtr/Articles/722_IntlRelPrincipalTheories_Slaughter_20110509zG.pdf

⁷ Korab-Karpowicz, W. Julian, "Political Realism in International Relations." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta(ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=realism-intl-relations>

⁸ Benning, Joseph. "Cosmopolitanism."

Encyclopaedia Britannica. 16 Jan 2014.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/cosmopolitanism-international-relations>

⁹ Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars*. 5th ed. 11 Aug 2015.

Additional Resources

Clouse, Robert G. *War: Four Christian Views*. 1986.

Boden, Jean. *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*. 1977.

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. 1689.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. 1762.

Chatterjee, Deen. ed. *The Ethics of Preventive War*. 2013.

Gray, Colin. "The Implications of Preemptive and Preventive War Doctrines: A Reconsideration"

Cox, Rory. "Historical Just War Theory up to Thomas Aquinas"

Topics

Just War Theory (*Jus ad bellum*)

Justice

Sovereignty

The Legalist Paradigm

Consequentialist vs. Deontological Ethics