



BOSTON DEBATE LEAGUE

Transforming School Culture Through Debate

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Argument Summaries

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Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its military and/or police presence in one or more of the following: South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey.

Afghanistan Summary

In response to the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, the United States led an international military intervention into Afghanistan, resulting in the removal of the Taliban government. Eventually, an interim authority was established led by President Hamid Karzai, a new Constitution was drafted and a national assembly was elected. Karzai was elected and then re-elected in November 2009.

During his 2008 campaign, President Obama promised to focus American attention back on the conflict in Afghanistan. After he conducted a yearlong review, in December 2009 he announced that the United States would deploy significantly more troops to Afghanistan. He raised the number of soldiers from 32,000 to over 90,000. At the same time, he announced that America would begin to pull out its troops in July 2011, with no definite date for complete withdrawal.

By June 2010, the conflict in Afghanistan had become the longest war in America's history, surpassing the previous record of eight years and seven months by the Vietnam War. President Obama's stated goals for our operation in Afghanistan: to ensure that "Afghanistan is stable, can stand on its own two feet when it comes to security issues, and is not a base for terrorist activity launched against the United States."

SUMMARY OF THE AFGHANISTAN AFFIRMATIVE: America's current policy toward Afghanistan is to expand our forces there to fight al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Unfortunately there is little chance this strategy will work, and violence continues at significant levels. Many observers predict that the U.S. will not adhere to the July 2011 deadline to begin withdrawal, as military assessments on the ground will be pessimistic. Therefore, the United States will indefinitely continue its policy of combating the insurgency with tens of thousands of American troops.

Not only is this force expensive in terms of American lives and dollars, a large military presence will not increase stability in Afghanistan. Instead, it causes the connection between al-Qaeda and the Taliban to tighten, increases anti-Americanism, and also increases the success of terrorist recruiting. Past experience with counter-insurgency strategies in other countries proves it will be a failure. Indeed, evidence indicates the Taliban is gaining strength and the government is becoming more anti-American.

Not only will our large military presence be counterproductive in Afghanistan, it will also increase radicalization in neighboring Pakistan. The large occupation force will increase anti-Americanism in Pakistan, which threatens the pro-American regime in power. Pakistan has nuclear weapons, so a civil war of any kind would present a huge risk that weapons of mass destruction will fall into terrorists' hands. In addition to threatening a civil war, radicalization of Pakistan would increase the likelihood they would be dragged into a conflict with archenemy India. A nuclear war could result.

The affirmative plan would reduce our military presence by changing our mission from counter-insurgency to counter-terrorism. It would not be a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. It would leave about 10-15,000 troops in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future to remain on guard against terrorist bases and activities. It would facilitate targeted strikes against specific terrorist actions.

An announcement of our future reduced presence would create positive political change within Afghanistan and Pakistan, strengthening our efforts to produce stability and modernization.

Korea Summary

The term “United States Forces Korea” refers to the entire military troop presence stationed in South Korea, including the ground, air and naval divisions. The total force level is approximately 37,500 troops.

In 1978, the U.S. and South Korea formed the Combined Forces Command (CFC), based in Seoul, and with a U.S. general in charge. A few years ago, the U.S. agreed to transfer its wartime command authority to South Korea. The planned date for completion of the OPCON military transfer is April 2012, less than two years away. If the CFC command is indeed transferred to South Korea, two separate military commands will be created. South Korean military forces, now under the command in wartime of the U.S. commander of the joint command, will then be under the wartime command of the ROK military.

This transition has been highly controversial because of how the timing relates to possible instability and leadership changes in North Korea. Leaders in both the United States and South Korea are calling for the reversal of that agreement and some evidence indicates it may be put on hold for an indefinite time. This is based on the fear that the transfer would convey a sign of weakness and lack of resolve by the United States to defend South Korea against North Korea.

Many American military officials foresee a changing role for the ground forces in South Korea. President Obama and U.S. commanders have spoken in 2009 of the possibility that remaining U.S. ground combat units in South Korea would be deployed to Afghanistan or other active theatres of combat. This would mean the U.S. defense role in South Korea would primarily be an air and sea role.

This affirmative argues that, counter to what the United States believes, its troop presence along the border between North and South Korea is much of what is creating the conflict between the two countries. It argues that tensions are high now, and will increase to the point of war in the near future. The affirmative would withdraw the 28,500 troops from the Korean Peninsula, arguing that this would promote stability by encouraging negotiations between the two countries and forcing China to become involved with the peace process.

Japan Summary

In 1960, the United States and Japan signed a historic treaty, which committed the United States to help defend Japan if Japan came under attack, and it provided bases and ports for U.S. armed forces in Japan. This agreement has lasted now for 50 years, enduring events such as the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the spread of nuclear weapons to North Korea and the rise of China. Today, the United States operates 85 military facilities in Japan, housing 44,850 U.S. military personnel and 44,000 of their dependents.

Close to 75 percent of those personnel are based on the island of Okinawa. Our troop presence there is strongly disliked by the island's population. In 1995, two U.S. marines raped a 12-year-old Japanese girl, creating an enormous anti-American backlash. The U.S. swiftly made plans to reduce the presence of American troops in Okinawa. In 2006, the U.S. agreed to move the Futenma base to a less populated part of Okinawa while also shifting some troops and their families to Guam.

The landslide electoral victory of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPC) last August, after over 50 years of uninterrupted rule by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), raises substantial questions about the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Yukio Hatoyama was named Japan's new Prime Minister from the DPC. He had campaigned opposing any new basing in Okinawa, including the abrogation of the 2006 agreement. After substantial pressure from the Obama administration, Hatoyama reversed positions, and agreed to the new U.S. base. He was then forced to resign as a result of going back on his campaign promise. New DPC Prime Minister Naoto Kan has announced that he will abide by the 2006 agreement.

The U.S. military's footprint in Japan is almost surely going to be a huge sticking point in the months and years ahead. Meanwhile, the bases there continue to be viewed by American military leaders as vital our defense efforts throughout Asia.

Summary of the Japan Affirmative:

The evidence in this file is would allow you to read an affirmative that claimed that the US should withdraw its military presence from Japan. The inherency evidence discusses the current plans for the U.S. military in Japan and the politics of American military bases in the country. Despite widespread public opposition to the bases in Japan and a failed plan to relocate the major US base on Okinawa, no action is being taken right now and the military presence seems stable.

The harms can be divided into two advantages. The first is US-Japan relations. The bases in Japan are a major source of friction between the US and Japan. Because the bases are so unpopular domestically in Japan, there is significant pressure to remove them, or worse, break off security cooperation between the US and Japan altogether. If this were to happen, neither the US nor Japan would be able to effectively maintain security in East Asia, especially deterring China and North Korea. Countries like China might take advantage of the bad relations and make a move towards regional hegemony. This would ultimately lead to a war in the region that would go nuclear. It is also possible that as a result of the US withdrawal that Japan might begin to build up its military (this is called rearmament, because they were banned from having a military after World War II). There is evidence about why this would increase stability, as it would allow Japan to take charge of the region and deter China.

Japan Summary

The second advantage centers around the environment surrounding Japan, specifically the ocean. The US military is a notorious polluter, and its training exercises in Japan are polluting the ocean around it. The military is dropping spent uranium shells into the ocean, which are a source of radiation. Specifically, the military's activities are destroying coral reefs and the Dugong, a seal-like species that is on the brink of extinction. The affirmative would argue that these coral reefs are an important source of biodiversity, which is necessary to keep the ecosystem, and humanity, alive.

The solvency contention would argue that withdrawing troops from Japan would cause a realignment in the US-Japan security alliance. The new relationship would be more equal, instead of the US dictating terms. This would be more sustainable and allow the two countries to work together to maintain security in East Asia.

Turkey Summary

A strong security partnership with Turkey has been an important element of U.S. policy in the Mediterranean and Middle East since the early 1950s. However, in the last few years, especially since 2003, relations between Turkey and the United States have fallen off significantly. The main reason for that is the fallout from the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, which Turkey did not support.

Incirlik Air Base remains an important base in NATO's southern region. Incirlik serves as a regional storage center for war reserve materials that would be used in combat operations. Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the U.S. military presence in Turkey has declined from 15,000 in the late 1980s to around 2,000 personnel today.

For more than 40 years, Turkey has housed U.S. tactical nuclear weapons (TNW). Tactical means that their range is relatively short, only up to 500 miles, which stands in comparison to ICBMs that fly thousands of miles. The TNW initially were placed in Turkey to serve as a rapid strike force against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It is believed that Turkey now hosts 90 gravity bombs (they drop from airplanes) however no permanent U.S. fighter wing is based at Incirlik Air Base. Therefore, one could reasonably conclude that NATO no longer relies on TNW for its defense.

Summary of the Turkey Affirmative:

The cards in this file are set up so that you should be able to read an affirmative about withdrawing the U.S.' tactical nuclear weapons from turkey. The inherency arguments will focus on how the U.S. maintains 90 gravity bombs at one air force base in Turkey, even though they lack the capacity to use them. Some evidence may talk about how the need for these weapons has disappeared with the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War twenty years ago, which the missiles were originally set up to deter.

The harms can be separated into two distinct advantages. The first is a nuclear terrorism advantage. The nuclear weapons stored at the base are not very well protected, as Turkey lacks the funding and refuses to commit the resources necessary to their safety. In fact, recent attempts have been made to break into the base, proving the danger of a nuclear theft. Because these are relatively small weapons, they would be relatively easy to steal for a group dedicated enough. The advantage would say that a nuclear attack by terrorists would be a catastrophe, as a stolen weapon would likely be used against the United States.

The second advantage is based off of Iran and Turkey's role in promoting stability in the Middle East. The advantage claims that Turkey and Iran have a special connection, and that Turkey could greatly aid in the negotiations between the US and Iran in order to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. However, in order for Turkey to leverage its relationship with Iran, it would have to be nuclear free state, in order to encourage Iran to follow its example. More broadly, the advantage claims that Turkey without nuclear weapons would be a model for the rest of the Middle East, which would maintain stability and prevent proliferation.

The solvency evidence talks about how the US has successfully removed weapons from Turkey before in much more tense situations, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, without event. The evidence also talks about how this would improve the stability and safety of the Middle East. Some other cards included refute the claim that the nuclear weapons are a crucial part of the United States' deterrent in the region, arguing that they are outdated and not needed in order to deter Russia or to keep NATO secure.

Allied Proliferation Summary

The disadvantage argues that the affirmative plan would lead other countries to seek nuclear weapons. The uniqueness claims that the United States is able to reassure its allies because of its extended deterrence – its ability to prevent aggressor countries from attacking its allies. The disadvantage argues that the main reason that American allies feel so safe even though many of them, such as South Korea and Turkey, directly border potentially dangerous enemy countries, is because the United States directly stations troops and other military equipment in those countries. These forces serve as a “trip-wire”, meaning that if an aggressor state were to attack a US ally, that they would have to target American forces, thus starting a war with the United States. This setup both prevents war and makes American allies feel safe.

However, the plan withdraws these forces from the countries in the resolution. The link argues that these countries would no longer feel secure absent the trip-wire of U.S. forces, even though they may still be U.S. allies and the U.S. may still claim to be looking out for them. The disadvantage argues that these countries would be motivated to seek nuclear weapons in order to take their safety into their own hands, because nuclear weapons are a relatively cheap and very powerful means to prevent war. After all, no country has ever attacked a country it believed to have fully functioning nuclear weapons.

The impact argues that this proliferation would greatly increase the risk of war. The spread of nuclear weapons makes them more vulnerable to theft from terrorists. It also makes it more likely that some leader might finally decide to use one, thus initiating a nuclear war. While some argue that nuclear weapons might bring peace, thinking that the weapons are so destructive that using them is unthinkable, the disadvantage thinks that more nuclear weapons creates too many safety issues and makes it likely that one will eventually be used.

Readiness Summary

In the status quo, America stands alone with the position of a very powerful, credible superpower. This status is often referred to as “primacy” or “hegemony.” America uses its unique standing to build up its influence throughout the world. Presumably, the result is stability, peace and prosperity in the world.

Primacy has traditionally been closely connected with military policies, as the deployment of armed forces is one of the main ways a nation exercises “hard power.” Hard power stands in contrast to “soft power” which refers to the ability of nations to influence others with cultural or moral standing. Both hard power and soft power have roles in establishing leadership.

Primacy is not easy to maintain. Several nations around the world, such as China, Russia and India hope to challenge American worldwide hegemony. There are also smaller nations, such as Iran, Venezuela and North that confront the United States in regional affairs. President Obama is struggling to preserve America’s leadership in a very difficult time, and so far he has achieved this goal.

A nation’s credibility in the world is evaluated several ways. Do they stand up when they are challenged, or do they run from a fight? Do they keep their promises with their allies? Do they stay consistent and predictable, or do their policies lurch from one to another? Nations, including the United States, are constantly being watched. This is particularly the case when a nation has a relatively new leader.

SUMMARY OF THE PRIMACY DISADVANTAGE: In the status quo, America will maintain its primacy in world affairs. President Obama has upheld American commitments, stayed true to our allies, and not radically shifted policies from the end of the Bush Administration.

The affirmative plan undermines America’s standing in the world by suddenly reversing its military troop deployment policy. In the case of Afghanistan, the United States would be seen as running from a fight. In South Korea and Japan, it would be seen as going back on a commitment to the security of those two countries in the face of challengers in Asia such as North Korea and China. In Turkey, it would hurt our perceptions in the Middle East and prevent us from being able to undertake combat operations there because Turkey is a key base. It would also send a signal to Russia, as the missiles there were placed during the Cold War to deter it.

The consequences of the loss of American primacy would be dire. The United States plays an important role in preventing conflicts around the world, and also stopping the conflicts that do exist from escalating to large-scale war. We do this through the credibility of our use of force. Without that credibility, immense conflicts in several global hot spots would become much more likely.

START Summary

This disadvantage argues that the plan would have harmful repercussions for President Obama's agenda. It argues that, currently, Obama is pursuing a treaty agreement with Russia over the number of nuclear weapons that each country can have and how they can be stored. The U.S. and Russia have both signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and it is up to the United States Senate in order to ratify it before the agreement will go into effect between the two countries. The disadvantage argues that START will be ratified by the Senate now because Obama is expending all of his effort convincing Senators and promising them favors in exchange for their votes.

The plan interferes with the ratification of the START treaty because it drains Obama's political capital. The disadvantage argues that the affirmative plan would be extremely unpopular and take lots of effort from Obama in order to pass, because members of Congress and the general public at large are highly in favor of the American forward deployments that the affirmative is reducing. As a result, Obama would have to spend his political capital in order to convince members of the Senate to go along with the affirmative plan. Because of this, he will not have enough influence left to also convince them to vote for the START treaty.

The impact of this is that the START agreement is important to create cooperation between the US and Russia that will spill over into other issues. A strong US-Russian relationship is important to manage many of the emerging threats of the new century.

Pashtun Participation Counterplan Summary

This is a condition counterplan. It argues that instead of just doing the plan, that the United States should only implement the plan and withdraw military presence if the country where the troops are agrees to take a certain course of action. It is called a condition counterplan because the presence withdrawal is not guaranteed, that there is a “condition” on which the plan will not be done.

This condition counterplan should be used against the Afghanistan affirmative. It argues that the US will withdraw its counterinsurgency forces from the country if the Afghanistan government agrees to enter negotiations with the Pashtun ethnic group of Afghanistan. The Pashtun is an ethnic minority in Afghanistan, and the Taliban government that ruled until the US intervention is predominantly from the Pashtun group. As a result, Pashtun rulers have been excluded from the political process and the creation of the new government. The counterplan argues that it is best for the stability of the country if these people can vote and hold political office. Absent this political agreement, the counterplan argues that the Pashtun will seek to create their own country, which will cause wars in the region and cause the breakup of Pakistan.

US-Japan FTA Counterplan Summary

This is a condition counterplan. It argues that instead of just doing the plan, that the United States should only implement the plan and withdraw military presence if the country where the troops are agrees to take a certain course of action. It is called a condition counterplan because the presence withdrawal is not guaranteed, that there is a “condition” on which the plan will not be done.

This condition counterplan should be used against the Japan affirmative. It argues that the US will withdraw its troops from Japan if Japan agrees to a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. An FTA is a special kind of treaty that prevents either the US or Japan from imposing tariffs on imports from the other country. Absent the condition, the Japanese would not agree to the FTA because of the disapproval of some domestic constituencies. The counterplan argues that the FTA is important for the world economy, because it will serve as a model agreement that the rest of Asia will model off of. The impacts argue that free trade between countries prevents war, because it makes them more dependent on each other.

North Korean Denuclearization Counterplan Summary

This is a condition counterplan. It argues that instead of just doing the plan, that the United States should only implement the plan and withdraw military presence if the country where the troops are agrees to take a certain course of action. It is called a condition counterplan because the presence withdrawal is not guaranteed, that there is a “condition” on which the plan will not be done.

This condition counterplan should be used against the South Korea affirmative. It argues that instead of committing to a unilateral troop withdrawal from the Korean Peninsula, that the US will only agree to remove its forces if North Korea agrees to end its nuclear program and give up its nuclear weapons. The counterplan argues that the US should use the troops in the Korean Peninsula as a bargaining chip with North Korea. North Korea has stated multiple times that a precondition to peace is a military withdrawal from the area, and that it would give up its nuclear program if it did not face any threats from the United States.

Condition on Kurdish State Counterplan Summary

This is a condition counterplan. It argues that instead of just doing the plan, that the United States should only implement the plan and withdraw military presence if the country where the troops are agrees to take a certain course of action. It is called a condition counterplan because the presence withdrawal is not guaranteed, that there is a “condition” on which the plan will not be done.

This condition counterplan should be used against the Turkey affirmative. It argues that the US will withdraw its nuclear weapons from Turkey if Turkey agrees to the creation of a new country for Kurdish peoples called Kurdistan. The counterplan argues that currently the Kurds are pushing for their country to be recognized, but Turkey is blocking the process. The US tactical nuclear weapons are a key bargaining chip, and that Turkey no longer wants them there. In exchange for the removal of nuclear weapons, Turkey will allow the Kurds to declare themselves an independent nation. The counterplan further argues that an independent Turkish state will help US stability and be a key ally in the region.

Topicality Summary

There are three topicality violations in this file. Topicality argues that the affirmative plan is not an example of the resolution.

This year's resolution is:

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its military and/or police presence in one or more of the following: South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey.

Topicality argues that the affirmative plan either does something partly not related to this, or has nothing to do with the resolution at all. Think of topicality like the prompt to an essay you would have to write in school. The prompt tells you broadly what you should be writing about, and you write about a specific example of something laid out in the prompt. If you write about something besides what the teacher wants you to be writing about, you will get a bad grade. The same is true in debate - if the affirmative is arguing something that is not an example of the resolution, then they are not doing their job.

Topicality arguments work by defining words from different sources in order to determine what we should be arguing about. Then, because there are many definitions for every word, the negative provides reasons why debaters should be abiding by their interpretation of the resolution.

There are three topicality violations in this file. Two of them define the phrase "military presence" in order to construct arguments. One interpretation defines military presence as military forces that are not performing direct combat roles, which would mean that the Afghanistan affirmative would not be topical, as many of the US forces in Afghanistan are actively fighting. The second topicality argument defines military presence as troops, in a country, as opposed to equipment, vehicles, or weapons. This argument would make the Turkey affirmative not topical, as the Turkey affirmative removes nuclear weapons. The final topicality argument is based off of a definition of reduce, and argues that "reduce" implies that an affirmative cannot completely eliminate the US' military presence in a country, and instead that it must leave some behind. This would make the South Korea and Japan affirmatives not topical, as they eliminate the entirety of the US presence in those countries.

Security Critique Summary

The security critique argues that the way we talk about the harms in the 1AC have an effect on the real world. In essence, it argues that we are not just passive observers of the world, and instead that what we say shapes the world and how other people react to us. The link argument is that many threats or disaster scenarios in international politics, like the advantages in the 1AC, are not really accurate representation of reality, but instead are contrived, worst-case scenarios that are extremely unlikely to happen. Many critiques, such as this one, argue that the world is much more complex and we cannot know for certain what the effects of the affirmative plan would be.

Moreover, these “constructions” of how we think the world works have a potentially harmful effect on the stability of the world. By creating scenarios where we view other countries as threats, we become more likely to view similar scenarios as threatening. This turns the case because it makes conflicts between countries more likely.

The impact evidence argues that these disaster scenarios are really horror stories that are designed to increase the government’s control over the population. The government is responsible for our security, and in times of increased threat the government gains more power in order to protect us. For example, in World War II, the government gained the power to detain people indefinitely just because it suspected that they might have ties to the Japanese. The impact evidence argues that similar things would happen with the affirmative: the affirmative will take advantage of how scared everyone becomes of the harms in the 1AC and use that fear to implement whatever it wants to do, with potentially harmful consequences.

The alternative says that we have to rethink how we talk about international politics. Instead of focusing on security and the consequences like the affirmative, we should reject that form of speaking with the hope that we will be able to come up with a better way of talking about these issues.