

also found that 8 out of 11 tournaments had teams who did better at their own tournament than they did at others, which is more than 2/3 of the time. Home field advantage is a significant and prevalent issue that teams should keep in mind in upcoming seasons.

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## Counterplans: Used as tests

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### ABSTRACT:

*This article attempts a new view of counterplans. We will begin by examining how counterplans, for the most part, are viewed in current academic competitive debate and why. Then the article will re-examine burdens and the assumptions of burdens. This article will finally explore other possibilities of negative's abilities to access the idea of counterplans due to negative's inability to access fiat.*

Traditionally in competitive academic debate, counterpanes are used as negative's ability to offer alternatives to the affirmative's case and access solvency of the status quo's harms. Roger Solt summarized this concept of counterplans best when he wrote, "a counterplan is a negative plan... which is offered to the judge as an alternative possessing coequal status with plan.(p. 127)" Solt assumes through this definition that negative has the same abilities as the affirmative.

### **Traditional Counterplan Theory**

Counterplan theory sees this alternative construction of existence as a necessity to prove an opportunity cost of doing plan. Micheal Korkok (1999) explains that opportunity costs are, "...the value of a choice is the difference between its worth and the worth of the best alternative that must be forgone. The worth of the best alternative that must be forgone is call a choice's *opportunity cost*. (p. 61)" Basically, if the affirmative's plan is enacted, there might be possible alternative actions that will disappear. If this alternative action is better than plan, then counterplan should be adopted and affirmative's plan should not be adopted.

To understand Solt's view of counterplans having "coequal status" to plans, one must understand why the affirmative has the abilities that they possess. The fundamental burden that the affirmative has is a burden of proof of truth of the resolution. Most times, the affirmative will do this by measures of hypothesis testing or parametersizing. Both can assess a policy-maker framework. Using this framework, this burden requires the affirmative to advocate the need for change in "a system." In order to prove this claim/resolution, the affirmative's plan must be proven beneficial. To give the affirmative the ability to prove that an action needs to be taken, the affirmative is given access to "fiat." Caitlin Hodge (2009) examines the idea of fiat when she writes "Fiat is the ability to assume that, for the debate, a plan will pass and assess its benefits and implications rather than the probability of its implementation.(p. 70)" This analysis examines that the affirmative is given special privileges in the debate round to prove what "should be" by fiat, without a burden of proving what "will be." Solt's argument is that the negative should be given the same privilege to give equal access to the round.

### **Problems with Traditional Concepts of Counterplan**

There are two basic problems with viewing counterplan in this manner: counterplan's inability to access the resolution by the decision maker and the access to negative fiat actually gives the negative unfair ground which mixes burdens. By examining both rationales, counterplans as advocacies are problematic tools for debate.

The easiest way to see that negative does not have this special fiat ability is by examining the decision making ability within the round. The decision-maker's burden within a debate round is to vote whether the affirmative's arguments accessed truth within the resolution. When the affirmative frames the round in a policy-maker paradigm, they use this framework to advocate: "if my policy is a good idea, then the resolution is true." Explained above, the affirmative is given the special ability to fiat within this framework. The negative's burden of "rejoinder" in this framework is to explain that "affirmative's action is not beneficial."

By viewing traditional concepts of counterplan, one would say that proving an opportunity cost by counterplan is negative's way of meeting this burden. However, this is flawed. The decision-maker can negatively vote for the negative's plan by way of the ballot. The decision-maker can only access if the resolution is true or not; whether the counterplan is better and should be enacted is outside the scope of the decision-maker. The decision-maker, by way of the ballot, can only vote to NOT do plan; they can never vote to do counterplan. Therefore; counterplan in this framework should be viewed as a distinct disadvantage, not as another advocacy within the round. Within the policy-maker framework, the use of a counterplan is the utilization of negative's ability to clash; negative's ability to examine why the action of the affirmative should not be taken. However, since negative does not have the burden of proof, negative can never access the action to be taken by the decision-maker.

Within a policy debate round, the question is "whether the action of the resolution should be taken;" the question is NOT "whether alternative action should be taken." Because this second question can never be accessed by the judge, negative fiat does not exist. The vote of the decision-maker on the ballot, within a policy maker paradigm, simply says that the action or inaction of the affirmative plan is a good idea. If the decision-maker votes (in anyway) for the negative team, the resolution does not access truth and no change is made in the system. The negative vote by the decision-maker

means that the resolution is false. Therefore, all negative vote lack access to any action (except inaction).

A second problem, with the traditional roles of counterplan, gives the negative too much ground. Examined above, the affirmative is given special access to fiat due to the affirmative's burden of proof. However, negative is also given the special privileges of presumption due to the negative's burden of rejoinder. Presumption is the concept that advocates that unless there is a proven need for the system to change, the system will remain the same. Tuman (1992) explains the access to this concept:

These theoretical presumption approaches can be analyzed into two main categories: stipulated/artificial and natural/psychological presumption. Stipulated presumption is simply an artificial rule of the game that is stipulated, negotiated, agreed to, or imposed, that governs which side prevails in the absence of overwhelming proof to the contrary. Natural or psychological presumption looks instead at how things are, or are perceived to be, in the state of nature, or in society today. This natural approach embraces the adage, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" and favors the least change from the *status quo*, presuming that there must be something favoring it, since it currently exists.

We can commonly see this concept in our legal system with the mindset "innocent until proven guilty." In a policy-maker framework, the negative is given this special ground to offset the affirmative's abilities. The concept of presumption can be easily seen in this scenario: The affirmative and negative enter the room. A policy-maker paradigm is established by the resolution. Both say nothing during the round. Who wins? Due to the idea of presumption, the negative would win. In this scenario, the affirmative's burden is to prove that change is need. If no change is proven, people would go about their daily lives according to the status quo.

Applying this concept of presumption and fiat to traditional counterplan theory, if the negative is given fiat ability, this skews ground. With fiat ability, negative has two advocacies, two plans, in the round. Luong (2002) advocates that if negative access fiat by advocating a counterplan, presumption then switches to the affirmative. This still leaves the same problem, just in the reverse. Now the affirmative has two advocacies to use as a moving target during the debate. The only fair division of ground is to prevent access to negative fiat for purposes of a counterplan.

### **Counterplans As Tests**

By no way is the author of this article advocating that counterplans should be forbidden as tool for the negative in competitive debate. However, we should understand how best to use them theoretically and to grant fair access to ground in the debate round. We do this by viewing counterplans as test to the advocacy. Just as debate scholars understood the problems with the affirmative advocating permutation theory as advocacy, so should we see counterplan theory advocated as advocacy. Tests are the only fair counter advocacies that the negative can access without abusing ground or mixing burdens.

Counterplans should be viewed as independent disadvantages to plan. Keeping the same understanding that counterplan advocates opportunity costs for the future, counterplans now act as deterrents to plan through an independent impact structure of that lost opportunity. With this view of counterplan, the negative can run multiple tests of the plan by running multiple test of the plan's opportunity cost. This view of counterplan

theory allows the negative to run multiple counterplans without abusing the affirmative by switching advocacies.

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