**COUNTERPLAN THEORY**

**THE BASICS**

A Counterplan is simply a plan proposed by the negative which solves for part of or all of the Aff. Advantage and has an additional benefit. Thus, the Negative team becomes in effect a second affirmative team in the round. A counterplan must meet two criteria:

1) It must be non-topical (this is debatable whether the CP must be non-topical)

2) It must be competitive, i.e. it must force the judge to choose between the Aff plan and the Counterplan, if the judge can do both the counterplan and plan, the counterplan is illegitimate

**FORM**

A counterplan will have the following parts

1) The counterplan – this sounds a lot like the aff plan and most counterplans will incorporate significant parts of the affirmative plan word for word

2) An observation indicating either a) the CP is non-topical (like a T violation) or b) giving reasons why topical counterplans are legitimate

3) An observation why the CP is competitive – usually because the CP is more beneficial then doing the plan or the CP and the plan together.

4) Net benefits – carded arguments why the CP is superior and reasoning why the CP gets some or all the affirmative advantage.

**DISPOSITIONALITY AND CONDITIONALITY**

The introduction of a CP in a round allows the judge at least three options: 1) the plan; 2) the CP; and 3) the status quo. However, by running the CP, the negative is implicitly saying the status quo is undesirable. In order to reconcile this problem the Negative may:

1) Claim the CP is unconditional – i.e. the Neg. is abandoning its defense of the SQ. Thus the round comes down to the CP versus the plan, the most desirable option wins. Thus even if the Plan causes 5 nuclear wars, if the CP causes 6, the judge would vote for the plan.

2) Claim the CP is dispositional- the CP is treated like a DA or T, the Negative may choose to drop the CP and retain its defense of the status quo. However, like a DA, if the CP is straight turned, the Negative must stick with it.

3) Claim the CP is Conditional – the CP is simply a test of the resolution, thus the Neg can still drop the CP at any time and may run contradictory positions i.e. Disads which link to both the plan and the CP.

**PERMUTATIONS**

A permutation is a test of a CP’s competitiveness. A permutation is a combination of part or all of the plan and part or all of the CP. A CP is not competitive is the Aff can establish that the permutation has better or the same advantages than the CP alone or the CP and the plan together.

**TYPES OF COUNTERPLANS**

Plan Inclusive Counterplans (PICs) - These types of counterplans essentially do the Affirmative plan but may use either 1) a different agent i.e. the Courts, Congress, the Executive Branch etc. will do the plan (“AGENT COUNTERPLAN”) or 2) a different process i.e. do the plan by consulting another actor, studying it, having a referendum, then doing the plan (“PROCESS COUNTERPLAN”). This type of CP will claim a net benefit by the different agent or process i.e. the Court will avoid Disads like Politics or Hegemony.

Types of Plan Inclusive CPs

1) Congress CP – have the Congress do the plan. You avoid politics disads and Congress is more democratic and get better social change

2) Executive Order CP- have the executive i.e. the president issue an order to do the plan. You avoid Congress or the Courts rolling back the plan and you get better solvency because the executive agencies will obey an executive order

3) Supreme Court CP - have the Supreme Court do the plan. You avoid political disads and the courts are the best mechanism for social change

4) Non-U.S. Government CP, you have another government agent such as the European Union, or some other non-government agent such as the VSO or another non-governmental organization (NGO) do the plan. This avoids politics and spending.

5) States CP, have the states do the plan, the advantage is that states protect rights better, federalism and avoids politics

6) Constitutional Convention – have the states declare a constitutional convention which amends the constitution to do the affirmative plan. This gets a democracy net benefit and captures all the affirmative advantages

7) Referendum CP– Have a vote before passing the plan. The advantage is democracy.

8) Consult [INSERT COUNTRY] – the US will consult someone and do the plan if they approve. This has the net benefit of good relations with the entity you consult with. Entities may include NATO, Japan, EU, Russia and China.

Advantage Specific- These types of Counterplans use a different mechanism to solve one or more of the Aff. Advantages i.e. if an affirmative advantage is softpower because the US is abusing human rights, the CP could be to ratify treaties such as the CTBT to prop up softpower some other manner. This type of CP is useful in combination with solvency turns and DisAds linked to the Aff. Plan which become net benefits to the CP.

**TIPS FOR DEBATING COUNTERPLANS**

1) Find out if its dispositional, conditional or otherwise – and run arguments why dispositionality and conditionality are bad (read off the sheet)

2) Find out reasons why the CP will not solve the affirmative advantages (these are all reasons why the plan is better than the CP)

3) PERMUTE, PERMUTE, PERMUTE try to permute by doing both the CP and the Plan

4) Run disads against the CP i.e. Courts are bad.

5) Run the theory block we originally got with the aff. files, this includes reasons why PICs and specific PICs are bad. Look in your notes on specific reasons why other types of Counterplans are bad.

COUNTERPLAN PREPARATIONS

In order to run a counterplan, you must understand what cases it applies to. For example, you cannot run a states counterplan against a case which relates to foreign policy action. You also need to understand how the counterplan solves the advantages of the case as well as gaining the net benefits. You should start with an overview which explains the above.

You will need to prepare specific blocks to:

1) cards relating to solvency of the counterplan

2) cards relating to the net benefit of the counterplan

3) cards relating to reasons why you cannot do both the counterplan and the plan to answer permutations

THEORY BLOCKS - The affirmative will have a raft of theoretical objections, watch for them attaching a voting issue on any or all of these, if so they must be answered, even if you drop the CP

1) PICs bad- the aff will argue that plan inclusive counterplans are abusive as they capture affirmative ground

2) Topical CPs bad- the aff. will argue that topical CPs are illegitimate since they capture affirmative ground and affirm the resolution

3) Conditionality/Dispositionality bad- the aff. will argue that the ability of the neg. to simply drop the CP is unfair as it is a moving target and skews time allocation

4) No Neg. fiat- the aff will argue that the neg has no resolution and therefore no fiat

5) Fiat abuse- the aff. will argue that the CP fiats too many actors and therefore is illegitimate

6) Severance permutations are bad-a severance permutation is one which severs an essential part of the aff. plan. You need reasons why this is illegitimate

7) Intrinsic permutations are bad- an intrinsic permutation is one which adds something not in the counterplan or the plan. You need reasons why this is illegitimate.

8) Agent/Process/consult Counterplans are bad – there are some pretty good reasons why consult counterplans are unfair, you need to justify their existence