

A
Community-
Driven Guide to



Modern
Parliamentary
Debate

THE PARLI DEBATE

• PREPBOOK •

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9. Kritiks

KRITIKS

“Kritiks”, “critiques”, “Ks” or “criticisms” (functionally, these terms are used interchangeably by most competitors and coaches) are philosophical objections to the PMC. One element that separates a kritik from a disadvantage is that the kritik typically does not include justification for the “uniqueness” of the argument. If you recall the example of a “non-unique” disadvantage given in the preceding disadvantage section:

↑U: United States hegemony is high in the status quo.

↑L and I/L: Plan *increases* United States hegemony.

↓I: Increasing United States hegemony is *bad* / Low United States hegemony is good.

For all practical purposes, this is an example of a criticism, though a kritik would not typically include a formally structured “uniqueness” section. In the disadvantage section, we suggested that a kritik might seek to challenge United States hegemony *without* following the uniqueness structure that we have discussed prior. In the disadvantage section, we suggested that *if* United States hegemony is *already high*, you may have a difficult time explaining why an increase in United States hegemony to a *higher level* is an undesirable outcome that the judge may want to avoid – this is precisely the focus of a kritik-style argument.

Another defining factor of a kritik-style argument is the outcome produced by voting for such an argument. In a traditional disadvantage structure, the judge is theoretically able to avoid the outcome of the disadvantage by rejecting the plan/advocacy presented in the PMC. Consider the following Politics DA discussed in the previous chapter:

↑U: CIR *will pass* in the status quo.

- ↓ L and I/L: Plan blocks CIR.
- ↑ I: CIR is *good*.

In this scenario, the judge is *able* to avoid the failure of CIR by voting *for* the opposition team or *against* the government team. Reconsider the hegemony scenario discussed above.

- ↑U: United States hegemony is high in the status quo.
- ↑L and I/L: Plan *increases* United States hegemony.
- ↓I: Increasing United States hegemony is *bad* / Low United States hegemony is *good*.

In this scenario, the judge might not be able to avoid the increase of United States hegemony for a variety of reasons external to the debate at hand. In fact, the judge might not be able to *avoid* surging United States hegemony *at all*, but *must* the judge endorse United States hegemony? Kritiks typically challenge the notion that the “uniqueness” of impacts or links should be a primary consideration when determining the most desirable outcome in a given set of circumstances. In fact, winning a kritik-style argument presupposes that the “uniqueness” of your argument should *not* (necessarily) be a primary consideration.

Kritik-style arguments also may not derive their “link” directly from a plan or advocacy text read during the PMC. For example, an opposition debater seeking to criticize United States hegemony might not be reliant on the PMC’s advancement of any particular increase in United States hegemony (that the government team deployed a “Hegemony Advantage” to the case, for example). Perhaps the PMC has merely taken for *granted* that the United States is the *actor* in the resolution. If the LOC selects to critique capitalism, the PMC might not engage in any sustained defense of a capitalist economic system. Perhaps the PMC argued that the plan/advocacy would bolster the United States economy. In this scenario, the LOC might choose to critique notions of capitalism embedded in the PMC. While the PMC did not *directly* support capitalism in this case, their argument included assumptions that might support a capitalist economic structure – thus, a “kritik debater” would say that the PMC *did* directly support capitalism.

Kritik-style arguments may also derive their link from the language or behavior of the opposing team. A few examples – the PMC might have repeatedly referred to “China”, while you have a reason that we should use “People’s Republic of China”; the PMC might refer to “ISIS” and you believe that this group should be referred to as “Daesh.” In these examples, we have offered a substitute for language used by the PMC. In other situations, the objection might not be as clearly defined. Imagine a scenario where the LOC objects to the PMC’s characterization of “nuclear war” impacts or the way in which the PMC characterizes “terrorism.” In these scenarios, LOC link arguments derive from the language used by government debaters, not the direct content of the arguments. In addition, some kritik-style arguments object to the manner in which the PMC chose to engage in the debate space – for example, their style or manner of debating or delivery.

Finally, some kritik-style arguments are commonly referred to as “project” arguments. I hesitate to categorize these arguments and will leave their discussion to later chapters. However, this style of kritik argument may place *little* or *no* importance on a direct link to *any* argument assumed or directly advanced by the PMC.

Answering Kritiks: The Basics

Answer the critique while paying special attention to any framework arguments made by the opposition. One very important lesson that you can adopt for critique debates is that it is not helpful to make impact comparisons, impact turns, or impact defense if the criticism has a framework that would necessarily preclude your argument from being true. For example, if the opposition team is making an argument that says that, “in the government framework, there is no value to life,” you must first answer *that* claim before you can start weighing the lives that you “save” versus the alternative to the criticism.

Reverse the order of a critique when you answer it in the MG; at the very least, change it up. Rarely will the LOC criticism be presented/ordered anything like the way in which you *need* to answer it. For example, the link debate is probably one of the *least* important parts of the debate. If your plan solves for the economy and the opposition critiques capitalism, it is going to be very hard for you to win “no link” arguments. You might want to spend more time on impact offense than on “no link” arguments, an area in which you are intuitively behind.

Make link turn arguments about how your case can solve back the “bad” portions of whatever their argument is critiquing, while preserving the “good” parts. As mentioned before, if the other team is critiquing capitalism, it is going to be very difficult to argue that you, in fact, *break down* capitalism. You can argue, however, that you solve *some* of the bad portions of capitalism, while preserving parts of capitalism necessary for beneficial social ordering (for example). This still allows you to play offense on the majority of the impact portion of the debate while still conceding *some* of their impact claims.

Do not simply answer framework by saying the *opposite*, make offensive arguments against the kritik framework. Argue that the framework with which the critique operates should not function within the decision calculus of the debate round/judge. As mentioned above, if the opposition kritik makes an argument that “life has no meaning in a capitalist system,” you may be tempted to say, “life does have meaning in a capitalist system.” While this strategy is likely part of a solid framework strategy, it is incomplete. You will want to answer such an argument “offensively” – explain why, for example, since capitalism is inevitable, this method of calculating decisions is particularly damaging. By separating the framework arguments, you are able to develop “offense” that is separate from the content objection of the kritik.

Challenge their kritik alternative. As mentioned above, the LOC order for a kritik is *rarely* the best order for the MG to follow. In the LOC, the alternative portion of the debate usually comes last. Usually the alternative is something that is optimistic, or at the very least, it is the weakest or most poorly reasoned portion of the criticism debate for the opposition team. This is why it is strategically disadvantageous to locate the alternative on the bottom of the MGC order. If you run out of time, does it make sense to get to potentially the weakest portion of their arguments with the least amount of time left? Why would you spend an insignificant amount of time on a portion of the debate that they are typically required to win in order to win the kritik?