

Judges Ballots 2011

Northwestern (Matt Fisher & Stephanie Spies) vs. Emory University) vs. 4-1 Aff. Northwestern



Kevin Kallmyer, University of Mary Washington

Northwestern Fisher and Spies vs. Emory Inamullah and Weil

The meeting of Northwestern FS on the affirmative and Emory IW on the negative put one of the best affirmative teams against one of the best negative teams in recent debate history. To put this in perspective, Northwestern FS had won 35 of their previous 37 affirmative elimination debates (2009 NDT--2011 NDT), with a 25 round aff elim winning streak (2009 NDT--2010 GSU). Emory IW had lost just 3 negative debates in the 2010-2011 debate season prior to the NDT. It was an honor to be able to judge the final debate of these four incredibly accomplished debaters.

The Debate

Northwestern FS read a new affirmative to increase family visas for immigrants from Haiti. One of the 1AC advantages argued that status quo mass migration by Haitians would overwhelm the Coast Guard and that the Coast Guard is key to U.S. naval power. In the 2AC, Stephanie argued that the credibility of U.S. naval power maintains open sea-lanes in the South China Seas (SCS), which was impacted in war. One of Northwestern's cards said that sea lane closure would collapse the global economy. In the 2NC, Stephen conceded this link to the economy and argued that economic collapse would cause a transition to a more sustainable economy, while continued economic growth will cause global climate change and disease spread.

My Decision: Affirmative for Northwestern FS

I think that the affirmative won that economic collapse will not lead to a transition to a more sustainable economic system and that economic decline makes climate change more likely. While Emory's evidence was good that economic decline is critical to solve climate change, Northwestern debated these arguments better in the 2AR and their evidence was a tier above Emory's. The affirmative also won a very low risk of their South China Seas impact and a low risk that economic collapse causes a transition war because of increased protectionism. Thus, the affirmative provided a better policy to prevent the certain impact of climate change and the possible, but unlikely, chance of a great power war.

The South China Seas Debate

I assessed that there was very little motive for China to start a war in the SCS. Stephen's 2NR framing was that war is no longer a mechanism for historical change because the international system raises the costs of war while allowing countries to achieve objectives through non-military means. Northwestern argued that this generic argument doesn't apply to the specificity of China

initiating conflict because of sovereignty issues. However, I don't know what the warrant is for this claim given the costs and viable alternatives to war, and Emory's no SCS war evidence seemed to validate their generic framing argument in the context of sovereignty disputes in the SCS. Therefore, to win this argument I think Northwestern had to more explicitly respond to the warrants in Stephen's 2NR framing, which I do not think they did. These arguments were strongly reinforced by Stephen's (very accurate) indicts that Northwestern's evidence spoke to regional tensions, but did not predict an actual war. Therefore, given the debating and lack of "war likely" evidence from Northwestern, I decided that the risk of this impact was very low.

The Economic Growth Debate

I decided that the key offensive arguments were resolved in the affirmative's favor. I assessed that economic collapse would increase the risk of climate change – collapse would not reduce consumption rates, but would increase consumption of cheaper and dirtier energy sources, whereas economic growth increases the likelihood of a global shift to green energy sources that could solve climate change. Additionally, I assessed that there was a low probability of a transition war.

A Flowing Issue

Northwestern said that Emory didn't have an impact to growth bad at the end of the debate. I did agree with Northwestern's description that the 2NC extended impact defense to disease. However, I did not have the 2NC extend a generic biodiversity impact takeout and I did have Ovais reading an extinction impact for climate change near the end of the 1NR.

Transition Wars

I think that the negative won that it is very unlikely that, in response to economic decline, states decide to become more aggressive and initiate wars. I think Emory won this argument both on the quality of their argumentation and evidence. Stephen's 2NR was excellent on these issues, speaking to state incentives and how leaders are likely to respond to economic constraints by focusing on domestic problems while avoiding foreign conflicts that require surplus wealth. While the 2AR responded with a litany of warrants for why states might go to war I think that the 2NR analysis proved that the incentive structure goes in the opposite direction.

However, I did think that one of Northwestern's arguments was isolated from this analysis. Stephanie extended their Panzer evidence that economic decline will cause countries to become protectionist and their Royal evidence that decline, because of decreases in trade flows, increases the risk of miscalculation. Stephen's argument that decline causes countries to turn inward seems to bolster the link to this argument. However, Emory's argument answers the escalation aspect of protectionism and just because a "miscalculation" warrant wasn't answered does not mean that war is 100% guaranteed, just that this one specific warrant is true. That warrant only gets Northwestern to *unintentional* war and needs to be framed in the context of arguments that Emory won—that an economic collapse destroys the surplus wealth necessary for war. Absent more explicit 2AR refutation of these warrants, I think this is a low-probability impact.

The Climate Change Debate

I decided that the consumption of resources is inevitable and that it is extremely unlikely that economic collapse would reduce

pollution rates enough to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. As Northwestern's Elliot evidence put it, the idea that economic collapse ends consumption is a "fantasy" because you can't just "turn off" CO2 emissions. Rather than reduce consumption, economic decline is more likely to cause the consumption of cheaper and dirtier forms of energy that are worse for the environment. These arguments proved that anti-consumption movements would not be successful after an economic collapse. I thought that while Emory's evidence was quite categorical that the only way to solve climate change was through economic collapse, Northwestern's argument was more nuanced that growth occurs on a curve where tipping points are eventually reached that shift the modes of production to clean technology. Stephanie ended her 2AR by saying that this clean technology can be diffused globally to solve the impact to climate change. The one argument that held me up was Emory's indict of the growth curve claiming that these models don't account for pollution externalities in developing countries. To me, however, Northwestern's argument proved that economic decline would just turn the United States into another developing country that uses dirty energy while economic growth would help resolve the "export" of pollution to developing countries by diffusing green technology globally. Either way, economic collapse is net-worse for the environment.

When evaluating this debate, I thought that the 2AR was better on these climate change arguments and that Northwestern's evidence was a tier above Emory's. First, because this debate was late breaking, the 2AR was able to explain a few warrants in new 1AR cards that provided this extra-level of analysis without an on-point response by the 2NR. In this instance, only having one speech to extend new block impact turns, coupled with the slew of new 1AR cards that Matt read, made it structurally difficult for the 2NR to pre-empt all of the potential 2AR strategies (with that said, I just cannot imagine a harder 2NR to give and this 2NR was so good in so many respects). Second, although the negative's evidence was quite good that an economic collapse would be *sufficient* to prevent the *worst* impacts of climate change (and actually made these distinctions), the analysis in Northwestern's evidence was qualitatively better. To vote neg, I needed to have some understanding of what the international community or anti-consumption movements do to immediately eliminate modes of production that cause climate change. In this debate, Northwestern's evidence was descriptive of how economic growth and decline *actually* play out, while Emory's evidence was only descriptive of a desirable end-state and asserted that an economic decline will cause that and that growth cannot.

Is Growth Sustainable?

First, I didn't think that the "growth is unsustainable" argument was impacted beyond the 2NR line that there is a delay disad and that collapse later would be worse. I was unsure what specific impact that triggers or why that outweighs Northwestern's offense. When thinking through this argument, the impact analysis at the top of the 2AR that timeframe matters provided a lens for me to evaluate this argument. Using that frame, I was unable to think of a reason why I should risk humanity's survival in the short-term because we might also be in trouble at some undefined point in the future. Stephen also said that this argument was a "terminal non-unique" which I interpreted to mean that inevitable economic collapse takes out the benefits of growth. I think this argument relied on winning more of the economic collapse solves warming debate to be relevant. Maybe an economic collapse is inevitable in the indefinite future, but maybe (because of growth) we've already solved climate change by the time that collapse comes. And why would I vote to initiate an economic collapse sooner rather than later if I think that economic collapse would cause a shift to dirty technology that increases the probability and timeframe of catastrophic climate change. As a result, given how I evaluated the rest of the debate, I didn't think that this argument provided a reason to vote negative.

Second, I think that Northwestern cast enough doubt on whether growth is unsustainable that I felt comfortable continuing economic growth and avoiding collapse for now. Emory's evidence that complexity theory makes growth unsustainable was

responded to by Northwestern's evidence that complexity can be managed because we can solve the new problems created by growth's complexity. These are competing claims and I didn't feel that either team resolved the argument. So I assessed that maybe complexity could cause an economic collapse but it doesn't make it inevitable. As a result, I'm not certain enough that collapse is inevitable to risk humanity in the short-term.

Concluding Thoughts

The debate community is an incredible home. Thank you to everyone, especially this year's phenomenal senior class, for making it such a great place. In particular, I'd like to thank Adrienne Brovero, Judd Kimball and Tim O'Donnell at the University of Mary Washington.

Aaron Hardy' Whitman College

Preliminary Stuff

Over the course of the last four years, I have had the pleasure of judging the four debaters in this final round a combined total of 111 times – for a total of 222 different speeches. When I really sit down and think about that number, it's pretty incredible. Not only because of sheer magnitude, but because in 222 tries, all four of you conducted yourself with intensity and class, every time.

I've also judged this particular matchup many, many times. Many of them in finals. Some (most) were exceptionally close. Some (few) were blowouts. One was even a coin flip. Some have been decided on good arguments, some on terrible ones. But content and outcomes aside, every single time has been an honor and a privilege.

I will feel it as a personal loss to not have the opportunity to judge any of you again. I'm sure that long after you have departed on the next phase of your lives, I will still hold the four of you up as examples to my students of what excellence in this activity means.

A sincere 222 thank you's.

(Kinda) Short Version

I vote negative for Emory. It's a pretty classic "try or die" vote for dedevelopment. I think the negative was significantly ahead on both the claim that warming will cause extinction without dedev, and that growth is unsustainable and will collapse inevitably. The neg also had sufficient defense to the aff's security-based scenarios (hegemony and transition wars) to win that I should gamble with dedev rather than keep growing unsustainably into the future.

Five global issues sum up my decision:

- 1) No terminal impact defense to warming – This, in my opinion, is the single most important mistake made by the affirmative. The neg had at least some impact defense questioning each of the affirmative’s scenarios for the end of the world – but the affirmative had zero indict of the claim that unchecked warming would kill everyone. This makes the entire warming debate exclusively a question of whether or not growth is better or worse to solve it. Once I assess that growth is incapable of solving for warming, then it’s try or die for the neg – even if I think dedevelopment runs very large risks or might not be completely effective. If the affirmative had made an argument that warming wouldn’t kill everyone, it would have changed the debate significantly for me.
- 2) Sustainability – The second most important component of my decision is that I think the negative conclusively won that growth wasn’t sustainable in the long run. This globally makes all the affirmative offense non-unique. If growth will collapse no matter what, why not collapse now when there’s at least a non-zero risk of solving warming? My read of this evidence is discussed in a more nuanced way below, but I think the affirmative responded well to most of the neg’s “collapse inevitable” warrants, but dropped a distinct warrant about resource limits.
- 3) Displacement – Given the impact magnitude question discussed above, one central question for determining offense in this debate was whether or not growth was net good or bad for the environment. This could have been a reasonably close issue, except I think the affirmative completely dropped the argument that all aff evidence is based off of an “inverted U” Kuznet’s curve which doesn’t take into account that the “pro-environment” effects of growth in the developed world are just displaced onto the developing world, making the net effect still negative. This also implicates the affirmative’s ability to win the sustainability debate.
- 4) Timeframe – Despite the above description of “try or die,” I think the aff could still win on “we have the fastest timeframe and you only die once.” But, I think the neg introduced sufficient defense to each of those scenarios to bring the net risk down well below the risk of warming.
- 5) Framework for evidence assessment – One of the most complicated tasks as a judge is deciding how to strike the right balance between allowing evidence to speak for itself, and privileging in-round debating on certain questions, especially where the evidence is silent. This is especially complicated in a debate like this one, both because the central issue in the debate was so late-breaking, which gave both sides much less time to develop and analyze the arguments, and because so much of the evidence on both sides spoke to separate issues simultaneously – a “sustainability” uniqueness card was frequently also a “growth key to environment” link card. I think it’s possible to “read” the stack of evidence in front of you in many different ways, depending on where you set those bars. For me, I thought the negative was ahead in two key areas –
 - a) In-Round – I think the 2NR did a better job than the 2AR of evidence comparison on several vital issues, indicting affirmative warrants, drawing out specific parts of evidence, etc...the 1AR and 2AR were both excellent speeches – but I think spent too much time on issues which were less strategically salient, and did their best debating on questions which were less important to my overall decision
 - b) Evidence Quality – I think the negative evidence quality was, on balance, better across the board. It had far more warrants and less empty rhetoric, was significantly more highlighted, etc...In a late-breaking debate where (by necessity) both sides have spent far more time reading cards than explaining them, evidence “speaking for itself” is far more likely to make a dispositive

difference to me. The 1AR was fantastic and read an incredible number of cards – but I think was ultimately still heavily constrained by the need to keep them so short, and made a few strategic errors in terms of which cards to read.

The remainder of this ballot will sketch out the above in significantly more detail – starting first with my assessment of the neg’s offense (environment), then the aff’s offense (security).

Impact Calc

The final two rebuttals did not contain a great deal of comparative impact calculus – both sides were more concerned with winning internal links to their signature offense. The 2AR probably did more in the way of direct comparison – discussing the importance of timeframe to the South China Seas scenario, for example, but I ultimately don’t think that this area of the debate matters a great deal.

First, discussed more below, is that the affirmative didn’t have any terminal impact defense to warming – which makes most discussion of magnitude irrelevant. Secondly, both sides conceded that the other team’s impacts had inroads into the other – either because nuclear war was bad for the environment, or because warming would result in nuclear war (based on 1AC evidence). In this instance, relative probabilities matter more than any simplistic impact interactions.

I ultimately concluded that the affirmative’s short-term internal link to wars based on the SCS or transition wars was pretty small – but the negative’s “warming inevitable and causes war” and “growth unsustainable” uniqueness claims complicated those scenarios far more. Any war we’d be fighting in a world without growth, we’d also be fighting in the long-run unless we de-develop.

For me, this uniqueness-based “try or die” probability calculus outweighs straightforward “timeframe first” arguments unless the probability of the short timeframe impact is enormous – that’s not true in this instance.

Sustainability/Mindset Shift

The next three sections are somewhat difficult to discuss in isolation, because so much of the evidence involved addressed multiple areas of clash simultaneously. And, the way that I assessed questions like growth’s impact on the environment also had obvious implications for the way I assessed the uniqueness question about growth’s sustainability. Both of the final two rebuttals discussed these issues in multiple places, and frequently without reference to specific cards – so this is my attempt to come up with a coherent picture of both what the debaters were talking about, and what the evidence said.

The first question is whether or not growth is “sustainable” in the abstract. I think the negative forwarded three arguments why growth would inevitably collapse in the future.

1) Complexity – I think the affirmative did pretty well against this warrant. The neg’s MacKenzie evidence wasn’t very dispositive and just blandly talked about why complex societies have increasing innovation needs, but the aff’s Tainter evidence (the author internally cited back and forth by both sides ev) spoke more clearly to the question of causation and was generally dismissive of the threats of complexity alone being sufficient to cause collapse.

2) Environmental damage – This begs the question of the whole larger debate discussed below about the net direction of growth's effect on the environment. The most important warrant in this discussion is that the negative had much better evidence on the “Kuznet's Curve” question that proved the affirmative's evidence misunderstood the “displacement” effects of growth on the environment. It is also worth noting that every other affirmative card that could be considered a “sustainability” answer fell exclusively into this category, and not the third.

3) Resource constraints – Several pieces of negative evidence (Cobb, Lewis, Speth, and Barry, at a minimum) clearly make the distinct warrant that growth collapse is inevitable in the long-run because the earth has finite resources and there's no way to continue growth without expanding to new resources. On the other side, the affirmative has ZERO cards on this question. I thought briefly about whether to construe a single line in one of the aff Tainter cards saying that “there are ways to cope,” as an answer, but it's not clear that it's talking about resources, it's not flagged by the aff, and there certainly isn't anything which resembles a highlighted warrant for what those “ways” might be. The traditional aff answers to this would be that growth will find a way to utilize new resources, will create infinite recycling, or will get off the rock – but the aff didn't make any of those arguments, and neither did any of the cards read in this debate.

It's hard to overstate the importance of winning this uniqueness argument for the negative – if there's a distinct warrant why growth collapse is inevitable that the affirmative has zero answer to, then it makes pretty much all of the affirmative's offense terminally non-unique. If the aff says “but growth collapse causes transition wars” – the obvious answer is “that's inevitable.” Ditto for any other argument why collapsing growth is bad or ineffective. No matter how bad dedeveloping might be, it's still better to do it now rather than later if it's going to be 100% inevitable in the long run.

A separate but related debate also takes place surrounding whether dedev would cause a “mindset shift.” At the outset, let me say that I think this debate is, ultimately, totally irrelevant. First, it does nothing to change the above calculation surrounding “better now than later.” Second, the neg doesn't need to win there's a mindset shift in order to win “solvency” for their warming offense. The negative evidence is very good that a massive collapse in growth is our only chance to stop emissions – a post-facto “mindset shift” would be a nice bonus, but the neg offense doesn't really hinge on that at all.

A vital component of this debate is totally missing for this to be a relevant question to assess – the affirmative never read a card that growth was inevitable, and would restart post collapse. The only reason that mindset shift arguments ever really matter in a dedev debate is as an answer to the affirmative argument that we'll just regrow and end up right back where we started, so we shouldn't take a risk on transition wars. That's an argument which is totally absent from the affirmative responses in this debate. The neg, on the other hand, did read a preempt to this missing argument – they had a pretty good Lewis card that said there would be neither the resources nor the will to restart unsustainable growth patterns post-collapse.

For the sake of completeness – I do think the affirmative introduced significant doubt over whether or not the transition to dedev would result in some sort of “eco-utopia.” The neg's evidence isn't great, and the aff has a few rhetorically powerful (though surprisingly short on warrants) cards (notably Rubin, Adler, and Monbiot) that indict the “fantasy” of the neg's dedev authors. I don't think that the negative got close to winning that the world post de-dev would be “environmentally friendly” or “totally peaceful.” But, again – I don't think that's a necessary component of the negative's solvency claim for warming. The earth might resemble a scene out of “The Road” or “Mad Max,” but at least it wouldn't be emitting CO2 fast enough to cause extinction.

I do think the neg's evidence is sufficient for there to be some chance of a mindset shift to a world of happy hippie communes. It probably won't happen, but it might. There's at least some chance, but I'm very confident that a collapse in growth is inevitable in the long-run.

Warming

It's worth noting that warming, as developed in this debate, is external and distinct from the general debate over the "environment." While that might seem a touch illogical, it's a byproduct of several strategic decisions made by the debaters and their insulation from each other is not really contested by either side.

One of the stranger areas of clash in this debate was over whether or not the affirmative had inadvertently read an impact to warming in the 1AC, and whether that, in turn, meant that they were left defenseless against the negative's impact calculus that warming was try or die.

First, this whole discussion is completely irrelevant – the 1NR read an additional impact to warming, just in case, and it went unquestioned by the 1AR.

But – despite the 2AR indignation on this issue, I ultimately think the negative is right about their characterization. The 1AC Takacs evidence definitely says the reason why the Amazon is key to avert extinction is the climate – it also says that this warming results in a nuclear war, which lets the negative access a lot of the security-based impact calc in the 2AR.

So, I'm left believing that both sides agree that warming will cause extinction. It's real, it's tied to emissions levels, there's no question of adaptation or survivability, etc...It should also be said that the 2AR debated this question without any sort of backup plan for defense to this impact. Certainly, no card read by the affirmative in this debate constituted impact defense to warming. At best, this whole discussion was 20 seconds in the 2AR, and centered only on the interaction with bio-diversity impacts and the 1AC Takacs card.

Despite having read a number of cards (discussed below) on whether growth is good or bad for the environment in general, the affirmative was much worse on evidence that spoke directly to growth's effect on warming specifically. A couple cards referenced emissions in passing, and one (Tierney) suggested the globe was undergoing "decarbonization" that would reduce emissions over the long term. This theoretically might have functioned as the affirmative's only specific answer to "warming is try or die" – but it didn't stack up well against the negative's cards and all of these cards (Tierney especially), suffered from the fatal "Kuznet's Curve" problem discussed below.

There is one other question to assess vis a vis warming – whether or not dedevelopment has any chance of solving either. If there was absolutely nothing I could do about warming either way, then I could safely ignore it and vote on the aff's security scenarios. I think the negative forwarded two distinct "solveny mechanisms" for dedev to prevent warming:

a) Mindset Shift – This is discussed above. I think there's some chance of this happening, but not a large one. The aff spent the vast majority of their time trying to defeat this solveny mechanism, while spending essentially none on the more important one.

b) Collapse – Most of the negative evidence isn't about a transition at all – it's just about the need for us to suffer through an (inevitable) collapse as quickly as possible, because it would eliminate the economic engine driving increased emissions. The neg's evidence on this is mostly of the “break some eggs to make an omelette” variety, and admits much of what the affirmative evidence is trying to accomplish – that the world post-collapse is unlikely to look pretty, but at least it's enough to avert extinction.

The negative evidence that a quick collapse is sufficient to stop warming was both quite good and pretty extensive – at least 5 cards (Cobb, Lewis, Barry, Siegel and McPherson) addressed the question directly. The Siegel evidence is even heavy on the relevant math computations on emissions. Stephanie had a moment in CX where she made a show of writing down some percentage related to warming and what was sufficient to solve – but this argument never made it into the 1AR or into a card.

On the other side, the aff had very little on-point evidence. Lots of affirmative evidence said the environment, in general, wouldn't be respected very much post-collapse. But only one card addressed the question of whether collapse would stop emissions. The aff Elliott card rhetorically asserted that declines in growth wouldn't affect warming, but it didn't have a highlighted warrant, and was much worse than the neg cards. Maybe more importantly, the Elliott evidence is very clearly only in the context of a small recession, not dedevelopment – the first line of the card is about if there is a “slump.” No affirmative evidence assumed a collapse of the economy on the order of the neg's link – which even the Elliott card seemed to suggest might be sufficient to solve warming.

Missing is any evidence from the affirmative that it's “too late” to solve warming via emissions cuts, because we're already past the tipping point from past emissions, so growth is a better strategy to roll the dice that we can “grow our way out” of the problem – this is the standard answer to dedev warming scenarios, but is almost completely absent in this debate. The Elliot card does contain an under-highlighted half-sentence that we can't “turn off the tap” but it doesn't provide any warrant, isn't clear it's discussing warming, and isn't talked about in any way by the 2AR.

Environment

There is some protest from the affirmative over whether the environment has an impact in the last two rebuttals. The 1NC did read bio-diversity defense on the case, but the 2NC definitely didn't extend it. It was very clear that he exclusively pressed the magnitude of the affirmative's internal link.

That question aside, I assessed that this did not implicate the warming impact – both because of technique-related issues discussed above, and because the warming impacts read in the debate were not explicit that “biodiversity” was the reason warming caused extinction, as opposed to something like ocean acidification or desertification. Either way, I think the uncontested magnitude of the warming impact is sufficient for the negative in this debate, whether the broader debate on the environment ended up negative-leaning or not.

The central issue for this portion of the debate is whether or not growth is net better or worse for the environment. I have already explained why I don't think this directly controls my assessment of the warming debate, since there's a different solvency mechanism in play, but the issues and evidence are obviously intertwined, and this has important implications for how I assess the terminal impact uniqueness and sustainability debates.

I think the affirmative made a vital error on this section of the debate – they were silent on one of the most important and well-debated components of the 2NR, which was a discussion of Kuznet’s Curves and pollution displacement. Essentially, the negative indicted the entirety of the affirmative’s set of evidence on growth improving environmental outcomes by introducing evidence that those growth models failed to account for the effect that growth has on the developing world. The negative’s evidence (Bagliani) says that there is no actual evidence for an “inverted U” or Kuznet’s curve, where increased growth causes pollution for awhile then tapers and declines once countries pass a certain threshold. The evidence says that while the environment might improve in rich countries as they grow, this is only an illusion – because most pollution gets delocalized to low income countries, which is net-worse in the long-run. Even several of the affirmative cards (such as Adler) seem to support this – explicitly citing improved outcomes in developed countries, but poor outcomes in developing ones.

It would have been difficult for this evidence to be more on-point to the affirmative’s cards on this question. Every card the affirmative read on growth being better for the environment referenced the idea of this “inverted U,” and more importantly, zero affirmative evidence responded to the thesis of pollution being displaced elsewhere. Nor was there a single word in the 2AR on the substance of this negative indict. The neg evidence also set up a framework for evaluating the impact of this argument on assessing the rest of the debate – it explicitly put this argument in terms of both the “finite resources” question which was so important for assessing the sustainability debate, and in the context of the affirmative’s only chance to win a uniqueness-based answer to “warming is try or die.”

I ultimately felt that this reduced the likelihood that growth would be better for the environment (and, by extension, warming) in the long-run to “very very small.”

By way of tying up the “environment/warming” side of the debate – At first glance, it appeared to me as though the affirmative had sufficient materials to win this debate. Certainly, after the 2AR I thought the neg might be in some trouble. But after reading the evidence, I can’t find an affirmative card in this debate that explicitly says that “if we keep growing, collapse won’t happen.” I also can’t find a card that says “if we keep growing, we can actually stop warming.” Due to (understandable, given 1AR pressure) highlighting, many of the aff cards largely lacked warrants, and on the issues of direct clash most relevant to the end result, the negative evidence was better.

I even think that if this debate was decided based on the affirmative cards as read vs. the negative cards read in most dedev debates, then the affirmative would win for sure – but in this debate, the negative presented some surprisingly good and well warranted evidence on the most central questions.

Transition Wars

Given that I think the neg wins the direction of offense on the non-security based scenarios, the affirmative has three other areas of potential offense. I ultimately don’t think any of them are sufficient to overcome the “try or die” problem of warming.

First and most importantly – “Collapse inevitable” makes all of this irrelevant. Once I think the negative won the “finite resources” argument that growth is unsustainable, none of this can be offense. The affirmative makes no effort to win a “now worse” argument, which means I think the negative has globally won a terminal uniqueness claim to the aff’s offense. Any transition war caused by collapse now would just happen in the future when growth inevitably collapses.

I think the negative evidence is enough to win a substantial mitigation of the risk of transition wars. Their evidence on whether declines in growth spark war is better warranted and somewhat more diverse. They have cards that diversionary theory is wrong (Baker), that all the statistical models and historical analogies the affirmative evidence is based on are wrong (Deudney), and the standard guns vs butter defense (Bennett and Nordstrom).

None of the neg's defense to this is absolute – while the affirmative Panzer evidence is largely just rhetorical, the Royal evidence is somewhat better on the risk of miscalc, does attempt to counter the neg claims regarding diversionary theory, and cites some competing scholarship. The aff also read some evidence indicting Bennett and Nordstrom. To the extent that I think the negative still wins a substantial inroad, it's because I think the as-highlighted evidence quality is higher in their favor, and the 2NR was more cohesive at warrant comparisons.

Hegemony

Whether I should view non-economy based war impacts as “unique” given that it is uncontested warming will result in a nuclear war is never really discussed. It seems that most of the internal links to why a heg decline or conflict in the South China Seas would escalate would be triggered in a world of rampant warming. But, I'm somewhat inclined to view these impacts as at least a little external, simply because neither side does a great job of discussing these impact interactions.

Either way, I think the negative won very significant defense to hegemony – Fettweis and Ikenberry are very good that US heg isn't correlated with the outbreak of war, and they answer all the affirmative evidence about power transitions and a rising China. Ev quality-wise, the neg was certainly ahead. I also think the 2NR did a better job of debating the “framing” of these impact arguments, while a lot of the 2AR spin sounded very compelling, but was ultimately not backed up very well by the evidence.

It is also worth noting that the 2AR didn't even really extend a terminal impact to hegemony proper, just the South China Seas component. But, the heg cards discussed above also impact how I read the SCS impacts, because they're all specific to the rise of China, which is the internal link to conflict in the region.

Certainly, the affirmative wins some risk of these arguments – but I think they would have to be very high to overcome the impact calculus framework discussed above.

South China Seas

I saw this debate very similarly to the generic arguments about hegemony. First, the negative hegemony evidence provides a “frame” for how to view this specific scenario – but the 1AC impact evidence was also frankly highlighted to the point of near incoherence. The 2NR went to pains to indict each of the affirmative cards and defend negative evidence against any 1AR indicts. The 2AR, while very good on particular components of scenario explanation, didn't have the same level of evidence-based depth or comparison for me to feel comfortable giving the aff a great deal of credit for un-discussed 1AC cards.

While the affirmative evidence might have been newer, the negative evidence (Bitzinger) that the Spratly's would ultimately not be a security concern or result in fighting was still quite good, and the evidence that China in particular wouldn't start a war due to economic concerns (Lloyds List) wasn't very directly responded to by the affirmative.

I thought that the negative won sufficient defense to this scenario to believe that the risk of war in the South China Seas was pretty small – based on the evidence, I had a hard time envisioning a scenario for China becoming belligerent and aggressive that didn't sound hyperbolic and exclusively rhetorical.

While this wasn't discussed in any depth in the debate, the affirmative might have had some chance to reaccess this scenario via an economic collapse, even if not from the original scenario – but it doesn't change the overall strategic picture much because of the aforementioned economy defense and the inevitability problem.

Again, none of the negative defense to the SCS is terminal – but even a significantly higher risk of any of these war scenarios wouldn't have changed my conclusion very much, because the neg still controlled the internal link to an inevitable extinction.

Conclusion

Having judged any number of dedev debates over the years (thanks Emory), I think a certain pattern of argument interaction emerges that dictates the best strategy for both sides to take in debating it. In this debate, I think the negative successfully saw and controlled the “critical arguments” on which the dedev strategy hinges – and I think the affirmative came just short of a complete blueprint for defeating what is ultimately a pretty silly argument. If in any dedev debate I was told the other side didn't read a card that warming wouldn't cause extinction, that growth could overcome limits on resources, or that growth would restart post-collapse, I think I would vote the same way an overwhelming percentage of the time.

One of the most helpful ways of conceptualizing this debate for me while trying to piece this together was to switch the sides and envision this scenario from the other direction. It doesn't change the math any, but it does make it easier to see certain argument interactions.

Think of it this way – Emory read an affirmative plan to crash the economy, and an advantage about global warming, which Northwestern also conceded resulted in the DA impact.

Northwestern went for a CP to “grow and build new green tech” with the Transition Wars DA and an internal net-benefit about heg and the SCS.

Northwestern didn't extend any impact defense at all to the warming advantage. They did win some defense to two aff solvency mechanisms, but dropped a third one which independently solved the case.

Emory had two solvency deficits to the CP – First, that it just caused emission displacement, because all the solvency evidence for the CP relied on a flawed “inverted U” model – an argument which Northwestern had zero evidence responding to. Second, the CP would fail in the long-run because of resource constraints – a component of a larger solvency deficit debate which Northwestern was doing well on, but had zero evidence responding to that specific warrant.

If an extinction-level advantage is dropped or near-dropped, with no harm-related defense to the case, and the CP has a very large solvency deficit, the threshold for how much of the DA the neg has to win goes way up – and the aff won plenty of defense to

both the DA and the internal net-benefit to get it below that threshold. At some level, it doesn't matter very much whether the DA is 10% or 40%, it's still not enough to overcome "try or die."

To me, it's all just a math equation – and I couldn't find a way to add up the risk of affirmative offense in this debate that could overcome terminal uniqueness problems or uncontested warming impacts.

Despite being decided on a single sheet of paper and only really touching on a handful of issues, this debate was still fairly complex, well-debated by both sides, and called for quite a bit of nuance in both evidence assessment and argument interaction. While in a vacuum, I might wish that the finals of the NDT were decided on something other than dedev, it was still an enjoyable and challenging debate to watch and judge.

Thanks again for the privilege – best of luck to all the participants with whatever they choose to do next.

Sarah Topp, Trinity University

Congrats to both teams! I am honored to judge you all in your last debate ever. For many reasons, the four of you exemplify what debate and debaters should be. I could go on for a long time listing all sorts of great things about each of you, but I'll keep it short and get to my decision.

Stephanie—You are the best 2A in the country. Your debate technique and affirmative strategizing is totally amazing. All debaters can learn a lot about this from watching videos of your debates. More impressive to me, however, is your in-round presence. So many young women (heck, so many men and women) can learn a lot from your ability to command an audience.

Steven—Your 2NC was awesome. It was super gutsy to audible during the 2NC, but it demonstrates just how deep your understanding of debate runs. Your ability to survey a round and figure out how to win is so impressive. I enjoyed judging you a lot when I got the opportunity.

Fisher—I still remember you sitting on stage with Brett and I after KU won the NDT in 2009. You were starry eyed and said, "I hope I make it here some day." Congrats on making it there. You deserve it. Your amiable personality, but fierce debate mind makes you an awesome competitor.

Ovais—I love that you don't lose yourself in debate. Lots of people can learn a lot from your ability to be funny during and between speeches. It's so easy for young debaters, especially, to forget that debate is a performance and that everyone needs to find their own debate style. You always did a great job showing yours.

I hope all of you consider coming back and coaching some day. Debate needs people like you who know debate, but also care about the community. Now, my decision:

The short of it:

I ultimately agree with the 2AR impact framing—short term matters. When confronted with two extinction level scenarios I should try to live another day. I am concerned about the long-term effects of growth. I think it increases consumption although tech can have a limiting effect on the pollution it causes. I think it's worse to collapse now however. A short-term collapse

harkens US China war, which is quite large and speeds up warming and environmental destruction. In other words, a US-China war quickly accesses extinction level impacts.

The longer version:

Is collapse coming?

The neg evidence claims three reasons for imminent collapse. First, complexity. There seems to be a sort of inevitability to complexity. The aff's use of Tainter seems to prove this. Humans naturally will continue to move toward complexity, which is necessary for society because it solves problems. The second and third are related: Environment and resources. In some ways both team's arguments concur with each other. Both say wealthier societies do use tons of resources and consume lots of energy. The Adler and Montgomery evidence compares lesser and more developed countries and shows that the lesser developed ones use more resources and pollute more. Both sides provide explanations for this that are not mutually exclusive: countries develop cleaner tech that decreases pollution, while simultaneously exporting some problems to the third world (as per Bagliani et al). It can both be true that lack of tech can encourage bad environmentalism and that exportation of capitalism and FDI increases pollution. In this manner, growth can mitigate pollution in some ways, while exacerbating it in others. The question then becomes what to do about it.

Should we rely on tech fixes or crash? Can economic collapse stop environmental degradation/warming, etc? And relatedly is a mindset shift fast enough? Siegel may be right that killing the economy leads to decreased emissions, but that doesn't answer the politics argument being made in the Elliot evidence. In times of collapse, it is a fantasy to believe sustainability of the environment is at the forefront. None of the aff evidence contests that IF people were to sign on to being smart consumers it would be effective, but I think they are playing decent defense against the propensity of this in the short term (and probably not prior to great power lashout). The Monbiot evidence questions the motives of those after collapse and says they are greedy. I have little confidence that a society post collapse will be peaceful and clean.

Further, I think there is a strong probability that a war will happen in the interim.

(Is war possible (either in the SQ or in the world of economic collapse?))

Generally, conflict will result—The Bennett and Nordstrom evidence assumes that countries will turn inward and preserve their resources in a time of crisis. However, this assumes that states domestically have the resources. Expansionism may be sort of costly as per Deudney, but that doesn't answer Panzer's claim that states don't have necessary the resources they need (like energy supplies). Deudney just assumes that states are trying to secure wealth. In the short term this is the dangerous protectionist impulse that Panzer addresses. If this is the case they are likely to fight others to secure them. This means the transition wouldn't be peaceful.

More specifically, China War is possible (though not likely in the status quo) and becomes probable in the world of economic collapse: The neg Fettweis evidence gives empirical trends but doesn't conclusively predict what happens in the absence of naval projection in the SLOCS. The aff's AP evidence proves that tensions are increasing now between the United States and China and that China is announcing military exercises in the area that will imminently threaten the US. The 2ar characterizes this type of move as preemptive on China's part and proves that China is attempting to modernize now and seems to prove the idea of Fettweis wrong, as posturing is happening now. China-US war would escalate and draw in nuclear powers. The neg doesn't contest (at least in the 2NR) that IF a war between the US and China were to erupt that it would go nuclear and that it would

escalate. Despite the magnitude of this advantage the probability of war breaking out is slightly diminished by the neg. There are some global factors (like the economy and ASEAN) according to the neg's Bitzinger and Desker evidence that are keeping China in check. I am not certain given their modernization that this is permanent nor does it disprove that a war is not possible. Also, the evidence assumes smooth economic times with interdependence, but this surely is not the case in a world of economic collapse. It is, overall, safer to delay war than it is to collapse the economy.

This was an awesome and competitive final round. People will be talking about it for while. I am happy to answer questions if you have them. Congratulations to both teams and good luck in your future endeavors!

Sincerely,
Sarah Topp

Chris Crowe, Univ. of Wyoming
