

An Adjudicator's Introduction To the Asian Debate Format

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Any forum with a claim to rationality has to take place within an established system of rules, more so if this forum contains the element of competition. It is this basic assumption that has inspired the creation of the 2 most ubiquitous debate tournament formats today: the British Parliamentary Format and the Asian Format. It is the latter that shall be discussed here.

THE TEAMS

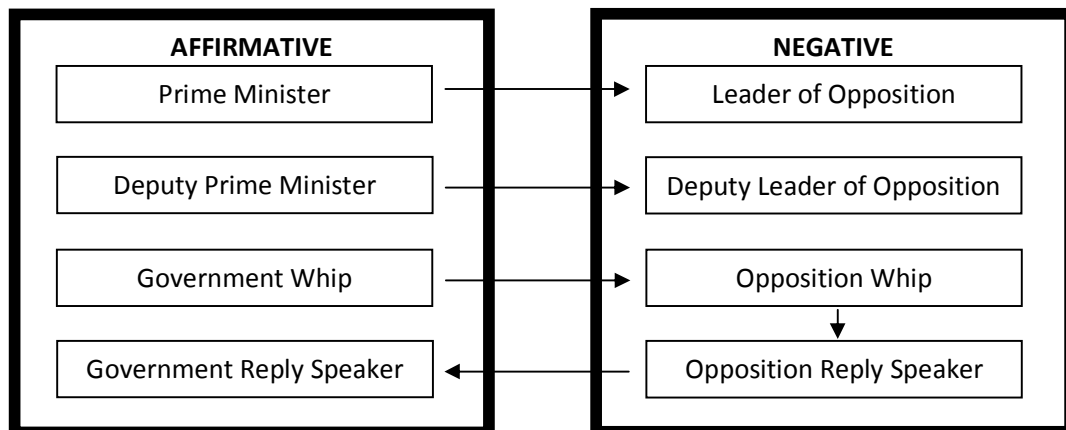
For a more simplified yet profound discussion of a **motion**, or resolution, the speakers in an Asian debate round are divided into the **Affirmative**, or Government, and the **Negative**, or Opposition.

The role of the Affirmative is to defend the motion provided, albeit in the framework and context it chooses. The role of the Negative is to argue that the motion should not be passed.

SPEECHES

A speech is the primary means by which debaters offer their material to the house. No visual aids, computer gadgets or printed material may be used during a speech. The first six speeches last for 7 minutes, with an extension of 20 seconds granted. This speech time can be interrupted by points of information (POIs) that are accepted by the speaker holding the floor. These POIs may be offered from time marked 1:00 to 6:00 (start of the 2nd minute and end of the 6th minute) and should not be longer than 15 seconds. The chair should referee the conduct of POIs and declare "Time!" or "15!" once 15 seconds have already elapsed. The last 2 speeches (the Reply Speeches) are allotted 4 minutes with an extension of 20 seconds, during which no POIS are allowed.

ORDER OF SPEAKING



SPEAKER ROLES OF THE AFFIRMATIVE

Prime Minister (Speech Time: 7 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Define the motion

2. State the stand of the Affirmative
3. Provide arguments that support the Affirmative stand

Deputy Prime Minister (Speech Time: 7 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Criticize the clash of the Negative provided by the Leader of the Opposition
2. Respond to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition
3. Clarify and support Prime Minister's material
4. Provide arguments that support the Affirmative stand

Government Whip (Speech Time: 7 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Respond to the speech of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition
2. Clarify and support the material of his or her constructive speakers
3. Summarize the contentions of the debate and resolve them in the Affirmative's favor

Reply Speaker of the Affirmative (Speech Time: 4 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Summarize the major flashpoints of the debate
2. Provide reasons why the Affirmative wins and the Negative loses the debate

SPEAKER ROLES OF THE NEGATIVE

Leader of the Opposition (Speech Time: 7 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Criticize the definition of the Prime Minister
2. Provide the clash of the Negative
3. Respond to the Prime Minister
4. Provide arguments that support the Negative's clash

Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Speech Time: 7 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Respond to the arguments of the Deputy Prime Minister
2. Clarify and support the material of the Leader of the Opposition
3. Provide arguments that support the Negative's clash

Opposition Whip (Speech Time: 7 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Respond to the constructive speakers of the Affirmative
2. Clarify and support the material of his constructive speakers
3. Summarize the contentions of the debate and resolve them in the Negative's favor

Reply Speaker of the Negative (Speech Time: 4 minutes with a 20-second extension)

1. Summarize the major flashpoints of the debate
2. Enumerate reasons why the Negative wins and the Affirmative loses the debate

DECORUM

1. The chair of the adjudication panel of a debate round facilitates the round and decides matters of decorum.

2. No offensive speech or gestures are allowed before, during or after a debate round.
3. Interjections may be made that do not prevent the comprehension of the speaker whose was given the floor to speak. This includes interjections made to offer a point of information.
4. Points of information may not be given until the one offering it is called. Once called, he is given up to 15 seconds during which he may not be interrupted.
5. A leeway of 10 seconds should be observed after a POI is given or rejected before the next POI is offered.
6. Parties may cross the house after the last debater in the round has spoken.
7. The only electronic devices that may be accessed during a round are electronic dictionaries and stopwatches. Cellphone use should be discretionary.
8. Members of a particular side may not consult any other individual outside of their team during the round.

ADJUDICATION

In the Asian Format, the role of the adjudicator is to evaluate the speakers of both teams and decide who wins the round. The points of evaluation cover a wide variety of standards. These are loosely categorized under **Manner**, **Matter** and **Method**. The adjudicator in the majority decision, usually the chair of a panel of adjudicators, delivers an oral adjudication detailing the reasons for the decision based on those standards.

Manner

For the purposes of this primer, manner shall refer to the sum total of speech delivery. Thus, it includes intonation, diction, emphasis, gestures, impact, and eye contact, among others. Manner can facilitate comprehension of a speech, or can be a barrier to it. Good manner is not boring and is easy to listen to. Excellent manner is persuasive and charismatic, and leaves the adjudicator with a lasting impression. However, manner is rarely the reason for a team's win or loss, if at all.

Matter

Matter is essentially the content of the speech. It includes arguments and rebuttals, as well as their attendant implications and examples, any clarifications and points of information made, and the team stand. The affirmative's definition is considered part of their matter, while the negative's clash also counts as matter. Matter is the most important part of a speaker's contribution to the debate and thus determines its outcome. Good matter is well-substantiated and easily understood. Excellent matter contains unique, insightful, intelligent points that act to favor the team's stand and devastate the opposing team's.

Method

Since we are dealing mainly with logic as the framework of discourse in Asian Parliamentary Format, organization becomes important for a point to come across well. Premises have to be established before conclusions can be drawn. Thus, the distribution of discussion points within a speech, the distribution of cases across speakers, the progression of the discussion across the team and other devices of logical organization comprise Method. Matter becomes clear when delivered with method, and good manner is required for method's structure to become apparent to the listener. Method therefore is the bridge between manner and matter.

Dynamism

A debate is an organic entity in which an exchange of logical parries takes place. It is paramount that teams adapt their strategy and respond to the changing needs of the debate. This responsiveness is frequently termed dynamism. Dynamic teams are able to ward off attacks on their arguments with good counterarguments and clarifications. They also attack both weak and strong points of their opponents. A dynamic team is able to revise its material, cutting out unnecessary or weak arguments, while strengthening its better points.

While the aforementioned items are the conventional standards that most adjudicators apply when evaluating teams, the principles to be applied should always be: **Fairness** and **Holism**. The following are some of the questions that may be asked by the adjudicator to ensure that he is fair and holistic:

1. Did I apply my standards equally to both teams?
2. What was the basis of my understanding/interpretation of this argument? Would others understand/interpret it the same way?
3. Has my personal knowledge or beliefs in the issue influenced my decision?
4. Was a team's manner a major reason why the team won/lost the debate?
5. Were the team's rebuttals for and criticism of the other team reasonable? Does the criticism/rebuttal apply to them too?
6. Will this argument work in the real world?
7. How did this argument/issue become irrelevant? Will the debate suffer if it wasn't discussed instead?

Scoring in Adjudication

For this tournament, individual speech scores range from 70 to 80 with no half points. Reply speeches are graded from 35 to 40 with no half points.

Margins can be as wide as allowed by the range of speaker scores. Since there will be no half point scores, it follows that there will be no half point margins.

The total score of a team is the added scores of the two constructive speakers, the rebuttal speaker and the reply speech. The total score of the winning team should be higher than the total score of the losing team.

DEFINITIONAL CHALLENGES

What is a definitional challenge and how do I evaluate one?

A definitional challenge is a declaration of the Negative of the invalidity of the definition given by the Prime Minister. It is issued only by the Leader of the Opposition. Given the clear and closed nature of motions of recent times, as well as the frustrations apparent in debates including them, definitional challenges have become a rarity. There are a limited number of grounds to issue definitional challenges, as follows:

- a. ***The definition is truistic*** – The debate is defined on an issue where an overwhelming majority of people accept a certain concept/side as the truth/reality/accepted standard. A good yardstick for whether a definition is truistic is to ask if the issue is debatable or not. This does not apply, though, to issues pertaining to the prevailing, but not necessarily correct point of view.

e.g. Debating on the acceptability of murder (truistic) vs debating on the death penalty (not truistic)

e.g. Debating on the abuse of women (truistic) vs debating on requiring veils for women in Islamic countries (not truistic)

e.g. Debating on the establishment of democracy in the Philippines (truistic) vs debating on the requiring a high school diploma to vote (not truistic)

- b. **The definition is time-set or place-set** – The debate is defined not in the present (but in the past or future), or is defined in a place/context where there is too little information for a fair debate to occur. The former is easy to identify. The latter is subjective to the context of the tournament. International tournaments will have less leeway for limitations in the context of the debate, but will allow for specific examples instead, to illustrate the applicability of arguments.

e.g. Debating whether or not Hiroshima should have been bombed (time set) vs debating whether or not nuclear bombs should be used again (set in the present)

e.g. Debating on the dissolution of the manufacturing bloc of companies in Bulacan (place set) vs debating on the dissolution of the ASEAN (set on a more widely known organization)

e.g. Debating on the release of Erap (place set, if used in World Universities Debate Championship) vs debating on the release of all Guantanamo Bay prisoners (set on a more widely known issue)

- c. **The definition is a squirrel** – The debate is defined out of the spirit of the motion, i.e. the issue/side defined was not the intended one. This is an intentionally broad construction of the concept of a squirrel, because the interpretation of the motion, depending on its semantics and culturally imbibed meanings, could also be very different among debaters. However, some squirrels may not be an honest reinterpretation of the motion, and may even be intentional. Many squirreled definitions ARE debatable. It is thus up to the Negative side on the receiving end of the definition to decide whether the definition is disadvantageous to them (and therefore spurring the challenge), or if it is workable and even better for them to go with it.

e.g. Motion: THW grant the indigenous people ownership of ancestral lands – hot issue at the time was indigenous people in the Philippines

Def 1: Granting Jews full control of Jerusalem (not the intended spirit of the motion, but still applicable)

Def 2: “Indigenoussness” is defined by length of stay. Issue defined was prevention of eviction of squatters from their land (not the intended spirit of the motion, in fact, wrong definition of “indigenoussness”)

e.g. Motion: THW condone vigilante killings

Def 1: Policy to punish vigilantes (condone means to tolerate, definition is not in the spirit of the motion)

Def 2: Allow them to continue but punish them if caught (still not in the spirit of the motion)

If a Negative team feels that a definitional challenge is necessary, the LO must do the following:

1. State clearly that he or she is challenging the definition.
2. Justify the challenge by supplying and explaining the basis or bases for the definitional challenge.
3. Supply an alternative definition and set-up.
4. Oppose the motion under the new definition.
5. Provide even-if rebuttals for the arguments of the Affirmative *except if the basis for the challenge is truism.*

How well the two sides defended their respective definitions is an important factor in deciding who won the debate. Other factors to be considered are also the quality of even-if rebuttals, unless the team claims their opponents' definition is truistic; the strength of constructive argumentation; as well as all other elements evaluated in debates without definitional challenges.