

How to characterize a debate?

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Characterization is more important than any other thing because it makes all your arguments and rebuttals stronger. So many times when you are not improving in debating, it is because your characterization is poor.

Two ways to do it:

- Characterize the actors, situation in general
- Characterize a specific subset of actors and prove that they are the most important

Sometimes it is obvious what to characterize. Often unclear in IR debates.

Best way to solve:

- Think of arguments and then work backwards to build the characterization
- Do characterization at the end of the prep. Implicit assumptions need to be justified in the characterization.

Don't practice only in debates. 15 mins is not sufficient. Develop skill and then condense it in 15 mins. Make arguments and then characterise.

HOW TO BUILD CHARACTERIZATION

Justification is important or else the adjs will not buy. Implication is important or else it becomes redundant

1. Description

- a. ask questions to yourself and give details. It takes confidence to characterize properly.
- b. List of questions
 - i. Genrally what are the actors, who, what has changed recently, history etc
 - ii. What are their interests, incentives, motivations etc.
 - iii. What are their thought processes or decision making procedures

THis is somethng skipped a lot. Rational reasoning is not always the case. Emotions, Religion etc. have impact on the thought making process.

Decision making process of CEO, managers, workers, shareholders etc are different.

You can change the intuition by talking about decision making processes.

Countries are also not always rational. Ex: BRI is not expansionist, imperialist. Ideological thing like history etc. can be used to justify BRI.

Trump cards they hold, powers, values, strngths for countries

Institution finance, jurisdiction

SOcial movements mass support.

Also think about weaknesses. Ex: Children. Because they cannot process intense things easily.

Actors within actors. Break down seemingly homogeneous groups. Social movements are made up of sympathizers, followers, leaders, victims etc.

Try to talk about any country as you talk about your own country. Linguistically, Say DElhi wont do this rather than India wont do this.

Characterization increases the level of arguments. For ex: while talking about Pakistan, talk about military leaders, Govt and right wing parties. Talk about each party. Like military. Diff bw religious right extremists and moderates. The basis of these args is good characterization

Characterization can also be boxed together as well. Like pakistan, asia, world. Regional stability in IR debates.

Strategical characterization involve general examples. Select ones critical to your cases.

Think about terms you want to use. Best way is to practice. Think about right language. Ideas to communicate. Intervention: Invading or Defending. Nudging and COercing. Intuition is swayed by this.

Caveat: Not all things need to be described equally. Use the assumptions and intuitions weaponize them. Probably, no one will contest it.

When to stop characterizing?

- Ask 2 questions
 - COuld it be strategic for any other team to contest this characterization? If yes, do characterize.
 - IF the ans is no. Then ask if your case depends on it? If yes still characterise it. Even if it is not going to be contested you still have to describe the situation. It creates an impact on your arguments.

2. Justification

- Characterization is necessary to be justified just like arguments.
- Ex; Democracy is weak in terms of govt. as compared to technocracy.
- Who is sending the message, who is recieving it will they internalize the message. Ex: Banning violent video games. Characterize children well like impressionable, peer pressure etc.
- Don't justify using a single reason for justification.

3. Implication (mostly skipped)

- Implications on the other teams, which arguments are made strong or weak.
- Make these things very very clear else it become a waste of time.
- Plausibility and weighing can be derived from weighing
- Characterization can be used to shift burdens. Characterize the trajectory of the status quo.

- Ex: EU sanctioning israel for building settlements. Trajectory of the isreali right to expand. SO the burden is to prevent escalation.
- Prove that the trajectory is escalation and we need to bring it zero. It does not mean that you have to give benefits. Gives more flexibility.

How to integrate into you speech?

- The end goal is to collapse distinction bw args and characterization
- Most valuable advice:
 - Making the first argument out of characterization as it often functions as arguments.
 - Next points are impacts which make it more important.
- THR the concept of genius.
 - First argument what is a genius. Detailed characterization. Genius is more than just being good. Its very close to irrational. Get lot implications. Frame OG and flip a lot of content.
 - Made the debate clearer.
 - Positive v/s negative perceptions of democracy. Spend the whole first argument explaining a lot of characterization.
 - Possible in policy debates.