Characterisations & Framing

structure of this workshop

- **what** are characterisations and framing
- **why** should you do those things (well)
- **principles** of characterisation
- **practical concerns**
    - *what* to characterise
    - *structuring* characterisations
    - *employing* characterisations
    - *rebutting* characterisations
- how to use characterisations as your **winning strategy**

what are characterisations and framing

- characterisations
    - parts of your speech where you are describing different actors or different contexts in order to make your arguments more plausible or more relevant
- framing
    - a very confusing term which people use for a variety of different things
    - can be thought of as the aggregate of all the pieces of characterisation you deployed throughout your case, ultimately painting a picture of the world that helps your case

why you **should** do them (well)

- many, if not most, higher level rooms are won and lost on characterisations; they're often much more powerful than we realise (or the judges realise!)

- many currently popular motions are extremely characterisation-heavy (e.g. all narrative, norms, glorification motions)

- it makes a massive difference for your speech - often allows you to get many extra speaks

- something you can improve on in a relatively short period of time

principles of characterisation

- there is no completely fixed context within which debates take place, there is a spectrum of subjectivity
    - this gives you the opportunity to describe the reality in a way that suits your case
    - but there are things outside of that spectrum - you cannot go completely silly
    e.g. Russia
        - can describe Putin's regime as very stable (e.g. nationalism, recent succesful power projections)
        - can describe Putin's regime as potentially vulnerable (e.g. recent protests, issues with rigged referendums, scandals with opposition)
        - BUT cannot go wild and claim Russia is a North Korea-like dictatorship or on the brink of a revolution
- characterisations are powerful because they sound objective - confidence when delivering is key

principles of characterisation ii

- your characterisations will be more plausible the more nuanced you are - how to achieve this?
    - stop thinking of actors as monoliths (e.g. countries, social movements, companies)
        - decisions are being made by groups and individuals within these, with varying levels of influence
        - e.g. political parties, religious organisations, army / allies, leaders, donors / stakeholders, workers, board of directors)
    - stop thinking of all actors as inherently rational
        - not everyone always weighs up their interests and then makes a decision - people act on anger, confusion, grief - think of different psychological processes
    - consider long term trajectories and trends
        - often people characterise through examples - it is better to research structural reasons as to why an actor is likely to act certain way across time and space (e.g. the U.S and bad interventions)

practical concerns

- what to characterise
    - in many cases, very obvious from the motion
        - if you are giving an actor extra power (e.g. the IMF, teachers vs. parents motions) you want to characterise them as good
        - if you are banning something, you want to portray how incredibly harmful this is
        → work on your intuition - the more you debate/prep motions, the clearer this will be!
- what if it is not?
    - you can always work backwards
    - work out the main points you are going to be arguing and see what might need characterising
    - ask yourself
        - is the other side likely to contest this? → high priority
        - are the impacts of my argument dependent on this characterisation?

- structuring characterisations
    - basic structure
        - descriptive claim
        - justification
        - implication
- descriptive claim
    - the assertive part of your characterisation - describe the actor/the context/the norm
    - think of your language - use the appropriate words to forward the correct emotion to the judge (e.g. are you coercing or encouraging?)
- justification
    - provide reasons as to why what you are claiming is true
- implication
    - tell the judge extremely clearly how your characterisation impacted the debate - did it take any arguments down? Strengthened others? Shifted burdens?

THBT it is in the interest of the ruling party of Kazakhstan to hold free and fair local elections of local officials

- characterisation I: people are still likely to vote for party-sympathetic candidates in these elections
    - opposition in Kazakhstan has been stifled for many years → no opposition candidates to actually run
    - the ruling party is not massively resented yet - providing decent economic development etc.
→ the implication of this is that this is unlikely to weaken the power of the ruling party

- characterisation II: the current trend is going in such direction that it is likely that without any change at all, people will eventually (and likely soon) become resentful of the government, which can lead to much more threatening protests and riots
    - new president without personality cult
    - recent scandals regarding freedom of press
    - protests in nearby countries e.g. Belarus could inspire

→ all of this means that the context the ruling party of Kazakhstan finds itself in is very delicate - it has enough support at this very moment so that this move would not threaten its power, but there are reasons to believe that if nothing is done, there might be a very significant risk of them losing power in the near future. This all means that the argument about appeasing the population is extremely relevant in the current context.
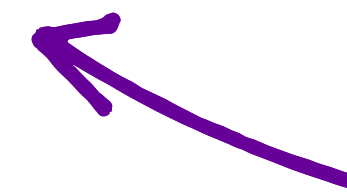
argument:
this will appease the population, by giving them a democratic right they care about, which will disincentivise them from protesting

outframing opp
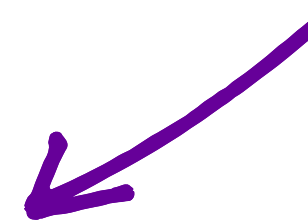
making our argument relevant & clarifying why not contradictory

- employing characterisations
    - where to place characterisations in your speech?
        - distinction between arguments and characterisations is often blurry - characterisations can be throughout speech
        - start of the speech - introduction (opportunity for a nice rhetorical intro to describe the overall context)
            - *THS the shaming of individuals as a tactic for social movements to catalyse change* (e.g. shaming individuals for not taking environmentally sustainable actions)
        - start of each argument ('the context in which you should consider this argument')
        - often the very first argument (e.g. how will this look like)
            - *THBT sex education classes in schools should teach techniques for sexual gratification*
    - recommend NOT to do it with impacts - judge might have already zoned out during your argument because did not see the relevance

THBT sex education classes in schools should teach techniques for sexual gratification (including, but not limited to, anal sex, oral sex, mutual gratification and masturbation)

GOV

this is going to be empowering and will provide information that is otherwise unavailable/misleading in a safe manner and safe space

OPP

- this will be uncomfortable and humiliating which means it will actually create unhealthy attitudes among kids towards sex because the association with shame and will prevent us from teaching useful things such as consent, safety etc.

characterisation that proves one or the other: what will this education look like?

- rebutting characterisations
    - make sure you pay attention to other teams characterisations - do not just concede things because they sound intuitive (but if you are going to counter-characterise something non-intuitive, be real about it)
    - structuring rebuttal
        - expose their characterisation - the power of it lays in the idea of objectivity
        - question it in the same way as you would question mechanisms
            - is this logical?
            - would this apply to all cases or to only a limited number?
    - provide your counter-characterisation and weigh-up
    - engage with their 'best case' anyway (but make it clear to the judges that you are doing that)

characterisations as a winning strategy

- helps with weigh-ups in general - allow you to make your arguments more relevant and the other side's arguments less plausible
- great way to win from closing
    - 'OO posited actor X could act in Y way, which would be bad - we characterised why they are likely to act like that in the majority of cases'
    - 'OG explained why this would create more voter engagement, we will explain why this is so crucial to happen right now in the context of country X'
    → this makes your opening's mechanims dependent on you
    - overcredit the opposite bench to pretend your characterisation is THE most important point - 'our opening said X, that is plausible, but OG responded with Y, which sounds equally plausible, so you really need our characterisation to adjudicate this'
- 'outframe' the entire top half/debate
    - e.g. Zagreb EUDC 2014 final
    - THW incentivise people to work from home