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# Comparative International Government

# Round-Table Debates

# OVERVIEW

Introduction

World history and global studies place politics as one of the major lenses through which these courses view, study, and make sense of our world. And politics has as its institutional basis government, so one of the most fruitful ways of studying the world is examining and comparing representative national governments. This is what students will be doing in the Comparative International Government Round-Table Debates.

Working in groups, students will be researching and building arguments and counter-arguments that compare the effectiveness and success of the national government they were assigned with the effectiveness and success of the other national governments. Of course, what defines governmental effectiveness and success is an important matter. For our purposes, four criteria will measure governmental performance and suitability: freedom, international standing/reputation, prosperity, and stability. Students’ arguments will reference these criteria, as they apply their factual and content knowledge of the six countries’ national governments to the structure of argument, as adapted to these guiding concepts.

The Comparative International Government Round-Table Debates will thereby produce a deeper, more information-rich, and thoroughly contextualized content understanding of the six representative national governments. At the same time, and equally, they will develop students’ academic argumentation skills – especially their ability to find and use convincing evidence to support claims, the sharpened critical thinking capacity to identify flaws or insufficiencies in arguments, and the analytic and communication aptitude to evaluate clashing ideas and viewpoints and synthesize a complex debate in a clear and point-driven manner.

The Debatable Issue

These Round-Table Diet Debates will revolve around this question:

**Which country has the best national government: China, North**

**Korea, Qatar, Sweden, Turkey, or the United States?**

Each group will argue that their national government is best-suited to their nation, and comparatively more effective, more successful, than the other national governments, based on four criteria:

(i) Freedom

To what extent are individual liberties, economic and personal freedoms, and

freedoms both “to” and “from” recognized and protected by the government?

(ii) International Standing/Reputation

To what extent is the nation and its government respected and well-regarded by other nations and the international community, and to what extent is the national government influential over global affairs?

(iii) Prosperity

To what extent is the nation economically prosperous, and how is the national government putting in place policies, assisting and supporting certain industries, and otherwise advancing national prosperity?

(iv) Stability

To what extent is the nation and its government and politics peaceful, stable,

and socially strong, or to what extent are the signs and effects of the lack of stability in the country?

**Methodology**

(1) The class will be divided into six groups.

(2) Each group will be assigned one national government to argue for and defend in our Round-Table Debates, and one national government that they will develop and make rebuttal arguments against.

(3) To the extent possible, each member of the group will take one of three speaking parts:

(a) Affirmative Case

(c) Negative Rebuttal

(d) Closing Statement

Any non-speaking group members will be responsible for fully assisting their teammates in every way possible, including preparations before the debates and ideas and suggestions during the debates.

(4) The groups will then have time to research the media list sources for their national government and the national government that they are directly rebutting.

(5) Each group’s overall position is that its national government is comparatively the best.

(6) Each group will build their arguments and thus outline their affirmative case, with two to three reasons why their position is true, formulated as arguments. Each argument in the affirmative case should have at least two pieces of evidence to support it, with reasoning to analytically explain how each piece of evidence supports or proves the claim.

(7) The groups will also develop arguments against the national government that they are to rebut. These arguments should each be supported by one piece of evidence – or by a direct critique of the other team’s evidence – with reasoning attaching it to a counter-claim. The rebuttal speech should refute the affirmative case arguments as specifically as possible, and should include at least four total arguments.

(8) The closing statement should respond to the rebuttal arguments against the affirmative case, and should make a comparative, evidence-based evaluation of the six national governments in the debate, one that ultimately favors its own national government.

(9) The Comparative Government Debates should be conducted according to the format (see below for the Speech Sequence), with the instructor keeping time and moderating.

(10) Each member of each group should carefully flow (i.e., track the arguments in) the entire debate, preferably using one color ink to flow the affirmative arguments and another color ink to flow the negative arguments in the debate.

(11) Each group will be given a team score of up to 50 points. There will be bonus points given for the debate winners, too. See the Argument-Centered Education Rubric and Assessment Form for a break-down of the criteria on which the group will be graded.

(12) Each individual will be required to write a 500-750 word (2-3 page) summative-assessment argument essay that argues for their reflective view on the most effective national government of the six. Any overall position is valid, as long as it is consistent, focused, and clear. Students are not required to argue in favor of the national government that they defended during the Comparative Government Debates.

The essay should be based on the arguments made in the debate, though it should also go beyond the analysis and evidence presented. The essay will be graded on the same criteria used for the debate, and will also be given a score of up to 50 points. So each student will be given a 50-point group debate grade and a 50-point individual writing grade.

Format

The entire debate is designed to take about 50 minutes.

**Affirmative Case 2 Minutes**

Each case should consist of two to three arguments for the effectiveness and success of its national government, based on the criteria identified above. So, in effect, teams should choose two of the four criteria on which to base their two focused claims for the superiority of their national government. Also, each argument should contain at least two pieces of evidence.

**Conference and Preparation 4 Minutes**

Teams should confer with their ideas and arguments, comparing and sharing their tracking forms, and then preparing for the rebuttal arguments to follow. Rebuttal arguments should be as specific and direct as possible to the arguments and evidence made in the case of the team that they are countering.

**Rebuttal 2 Minutes**

Following all six of the affirmative cases, each team will have a speaker who delivers a rebuttal against one of the pre-assigned national governments. The rebuttal speech should refute the affirmative case arguments as specifically and directly as possible, though in some instances independent counter-arguments are appropriate. The rebuttal speech should include four arguments refuting the case. Each argument should be supported by one piece of evidence, or should analyze one piece of the opponent’s evidence.

**Conference and Preparation 4 Minutes**

Teams should confer with their ideas and arguments, comparing and sharing their tracking forms, and then preparing for the closing statements to follow.

**Closing Statement 2.5 Minutes**

The closing statement should respond to the rebuttal arguments made against the affirmative case. And, just as importantly, the closing statement should make evaluative, comparative arguments attempting to persuade the audience that its national government is the best government within this representative, comparative list.

The debate will be followed by a vote for the winning groups. Each student will vote for the diet that they think won the debate – with the restriction that no student can vote for their own group. The top three groups will receive bonus points on their group assessment – 1st, 5 points, 2nd 2 points, 3rd 1 point.