Chapter Eleven
Arguments by First Government Teams

All speakers in the debate must construct arguments to support their side of the motion and, with the exception of the Prime Minister, must refute arguments made by the other side in the debate. Previous chapters focused on general principles for constructing arguments—principles that can be used by anyone supporting or opposing a motion. Upcoming chapters will focus on how the different speakers engage in the process of constructing arguments. The particular kinds of arguments that speakers will make vary depending on their speaking positions. This chapter will focus on the First Government Team, both the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, how they construct arguments in support of the motion.

The first section of this chapter will further describe the role of the First Government team, especially in constructing the Prime Minister’s Constructive speech. The construction of this speech ordinarily is a joint effort of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister who cooperate to outline the case during their preparation time. This speech is particularly important because it sets the direction and focus for the entire debate. Other debaters supporting motion (the Second Government Team) are obliged to advocate the same position taken by the First Government Team although they may use different arguments to do so. If this speech is poorly constructed or if the position taken by the Prime Minister is unclear, then the remainder of the debate will likely be unclear as well. A good speech by the Prime Minister does not assure that the rest of the debate will be a good one, but a good Prime Minister speech is essential to starting the debate on the right track. To get the debate started in a positive manner, the First Government team, in both their preparation time and briefly in the Prime Minister’s constructive speech, needs to give some attention to the analysis of the motion.

Analyze the Motion

Since the purpose of the Prime Minister’s speech is to develop a case to support a motion, the debaters of the First Government team need to analyze the motion so that they clearly understand and state what will be the principle focus of the debate. As stated in Chapter 2, a motion is presented to the debaters some time prior to the start of the debate. A motion can be thought of like a claim. It is a statement that the debaters try to get the adjudicator or audience to accept. Motions, like claims, can be thought of as falling into categories of description, definition, relationship, and evaluation. Ordinarily the claims that are offered in British Parliamentary debate fall into the category of evaluation. These kinds of motions assign values to objects and others ask debaters to propose and support a policy or an action. Thinking clearly about the kind of motion offered can help students in their analysis of the motion and thus, can help them think carefully about how to construct the Prime Minister’s Constructive speech.
For example, if the motion is one asking debaters to assign a value to an object, those debaters will need to carefully describe important features of the object, clarify the value, and then associate that value with object. An example of such a motion is “Health care is a fundamental human right.” Debaters hearing such a motion may immediately understand that the substance of their argument needs to include a description of important features of the object to be evaluated and a link between that value and the object. The debater will need to describe certain features of health care and link those features to a value of human rights. More will be said about how to accomplish this later.

If the motion is one that asks debaters to propose and support a policy or action, then the debaters need to frame their arguments differently than if the motion simply asked them to evaluate an object. An example of such a motion is “the People’s Republic of China should reform the hukou policy.” Upon being presented with such a motion, debaters realize that they need to describe the policy or action they support then provide one or more reasons to support that policy. Thinking about whether the motion asks you to evaluate an object or whether it asks you to propose and support a policy will help you determine the issues you need to be prepared to argue and the kinds of claims you may want to make in the Prime Minister’s constructive speech.

So the analysis of the motion is important to help the debaters think about how to support the motion and how to construct the Prime Minister’s speech. Of course, each team will take steps to analyze the motion so they can prepare to make arguments about it. Analyzing the motion is a process that generally occurs during the preparation time of all four speakers. However, the Prime Minister’s analysis is the one that will be primarily responsible for guiding the direction that the debate will take.

Analyzing the motion is a very important precursor to supporting it. Taking the time to think about the ways they want to focus the debate, thinking about the direction they believe the debate should take, and which arguments are central and which are peripheral will help debaters construct a persuasive and sound case for the motion. By clearly analyzing the motion, the debaters come to see exactly what that they need to be prepared to support.

**Creating a Case for the Motion**

Having analyzed the motion, creating a case for the motion can be conceived of in three steps: 1) defining and interpreting the motion, 2) describing the approach the First Government team will take, and 3) creating one or more arguments to support the First Government team’s model. Before considering these three steps, a few words about analyzing the motion.
Defining and Interpreting the Motion

Because they speak first, the First Government team has the right and responsibility to define and interpret the motion. Their right to define and interpret the motion means that they are the team who will decide the ultimate direction and focus of the debate. As discussed earlier, some motions can be debated in a number of very legitimate yet different ways. In cases like these, the First Government team has the right to decide which of these legitimate areas will be the focus of this particular debate. The decision they make is one that the other three teams will have to follow. If, the motion is “Nations of the world should take greater responsibility to curb pollution,” the First Government team might decide to focus on countries of the developing world and on air pollution. If they do so, that focus will guide the entire debate. The other teams cannot choose to change the focus from, say, the developing world to the developed world or from air pollution to water pollution. This convention of allowing the decision about defining and interpreting the motion to the First Government team is a good way to ensure that a debate begins and ends with a certain focus rather than wandering from topic to topic.

The right to define and interpret the motion gives the First Government team a certain advantage in the debate. For this reason, the right to define and interpret the motion carries a responsibility to do so in a reasonable fashion. This responsibility is to define and interpret the motion in a way that helps to ensure a good debate for all participants and is not a self-serving case that helps the First Government team “win” the debate. The criterion that ought to be employed to determine if the definition and interpretation is appropriate is what might be called a “reasonable person” standard. Would a reasonable person agree that the definitions and the interpretations are legitimate? Would a reasonable person agree that the definitions and the interpretations are such that they have the potential to lead to a good debate on the topic? If the answer to these questions are “yes,” then the First Government team has fulfilled their responsibility with regard to defining and interpreting the motion and the other teams are therefore obliged to follow these definitions and interpretations for the remainder of the debate.

Some motions are relatively clear from the outset and others are fairly ambiguous. The clearer and more concrete the motion; the less will be needed in terms of defining and interpreting. The dual process of defining and interpreting are related to each other yet conceptually distinct. Defining the motion simply refers to providing clear meanings for any words or phrases that might not be understood by the audience or that might have multiple meanings. Interpreting the motion ordinarily involves narrowing and focusing the motion for debate. Defining and interpreting the motion are two processes used to set the focus and direction of the debate.

Take for instance, the motion that “The People’s Republic of China should abolish capital punishment.” This motion is so clear that it likely requires little if any definition. The important phrases “People’s Republic of China” and “capital punishment” are likely understood by audience members and don’t seem to have more than one important meaning. Furthermore, the motion is concrete in terms of both the suggested actor and the proposed action so that it needs little interpretation in order to have a clear and focused
debate. First, the actor is clearly specified in the motion as the People’s Republic of China. Had the motion stated, “Nations of the world should abolish capital punishment,” further interpretation might be required to focus the debate. Such a debate might reasonably be about policies in the United States, the Arab world, or parts of Asia. In addition to a clear actor, the statement of the motion requires little interpretation of the action to be undertaken. Had the motion used the word “reform” rather than the word “abolish,” the motion would have been more abstract and more open to interpretation. One could envision reform of capital punishment as involving a range of possible actions such as limiting the kinds of crimes for which capital punishment is used, limiting the age of persons who might be executed, specifying the methods of execution, specifying the conditions under which capital punishment is called for, etc. But this motion, by using the word “abolish” clearly calls for an end to rather than a reform of capital punishment and thus, very little interpretation is needed beyond a direct statement of the motion.

When a motion does need to be focused and limited, the Prime Minister may want to say a few words to justify the focus. Take the motion that “Capital Punishment should be reformed.” Perhaps the debaters want to focus the motion on the Middle East and on the particularly cruel methods used to execute people. They might justify their focus by mentioning the common use of capital punishment in the Middle East and by briefly describing the cruelest methods of capital punishment—stoning, beheading, hanging, etc. Since this interpretation does involve a more limited discussion than one might expect in a typical debate about capital punishment, the opposing debaters and the adjudicators will probably be looking forward to some kind of justification of the limitation. Some potential justifications might include the frequency of capital punishment in the Middle East, the frequency of these particular methods of capital punishment, and the existence of alternative methods that are less cruel. Because this interpretation is more limited, it also may require more justification than a more standard interpretation that, for instance, involves limiting capital punishment to first-degree murder, or ending capital punishment of juveniles or mentally disabled people.

Different motions require different levels of definition and interpretation depending on whether the motion is more or less concrete or is worded in a more or less ambiguous manner. Consider two examples, one that has some limited room for interpretation and another that has a much wider range of legitimate interpretations. The first example is that “The Republic of South Africa should significantly alter its policies regarding the Kruger National Park.” This motion is fairly concrete, but still leaves some room for definition and interpretation. Like the earlier motion, this one contains a very clear actor in terms of the Republic of South Africa. Unlike the earlier motion, this one contains one term with which some members of the audience might not be familiar and yet another term that is open to interpretation and clarification. Some members of the audience might be unfamiliar with the “Kruger National Park.” Thus, the debaters ought to define it for the audience so the debate could proceed with clarity. Also, the term “significantly alter” can have a variety of interpretations so the First Government team needs to provide their interpretation of “significantly alteration” in order to set a clear direction for the debate. “Reform” of policies regarding the Kruger National Park might be thought of as changing the ways the
government tries to protect endangered species within the park, or changing admission policies within the park, or changing water policies inside the park. Thus, this motion requires at least some definition and interpretation.

A different motion might be even more ambiguous and thus need more definition or interpretation. Take for instance, the motion that the “Nations of the world should take greater responsibility for protection of the environment.” In this case, although the individual terms are clear and need little definition, the topic needs to be narrowed and focused in order to have a good debate. Three key phrases, “nations of the world,” “greater responsibility,” and “protection of the environment,” all need to be narrowed and focused. Otherwise, the resulting debate will be too general and will not result in specific arguments. Thus, the First Government team should make clear how they intend to focus the debate: Which “nations of the world” will be emphasized? What kind of “greater responsibilities” should be expected of these nations? Which arenas of “protection of the environment” should be the subject of the debate? By focusing and narrowing the scope of the debate in these three areas, the First Government team will help to start the debate in a productive direction.

**Describing the Position the Government Team will Defend**

Clearly describing and specifying the position that the Government team will defend flows directly from their definition and interpretation of the motion. This second step is simply a clearer and perhaps more specific way of explaining the First Government team’s definitions and interpretation. The Prime Minister’s responsibility with regard to this second step is simply to provide a very clear statement of what the First Government team will advocate and defend.

If the motion is a value motion asking debaters to assess some object (person, idea, institution, etc.), then the Prime Minister should clearly specify the person, idea, or institution to be assessed and should note the specific value or principle that will be used to evaluate that object. So for instance, if a motion states, “Health care is a fundamental human right,” the Prime Minister needs to clarify how he or she will focus the debate, especially in terms of health care. Perhaps the First Government team will decide to focus on emergency medical care, or on preventive medical care. In such a case, the Prime Minister might fulfill their responsibility by stating, “We believe all citizens have a fundamental right to emergency health care and we further believe that providing such care is a fundamental responsibility of our government.” This statement describes the object they intend to evaluate (emergency health care) as well as the value or principle (fundamental responsibility of government) they will employ to create the evaluation. Their statement not only describes the position the First Government team will defend, but it also describes the direction the rest of the debate will take as well. All other teams will then be obliged to discuss emergency health care, not preventive health care not reproductive care, etc. Certainly other teams can appropriately bring other values and/or principles to bear on the evaluative process (cost, well-being, etc.) but all of these values will be discussed in terms of emergency care.
The statement of the position the Government Teams will defend makes explicit all of the decisions that were implicit in the definitions and interpretations. The definitions and interpretations are thus crystalized in order to make clear that the debate is not about the motion as a whole, but rather about a more focused and clearly defined position to guide the debate.

The examples above refer to instances where the motion is one of value, attaching a value to an object. One other common kind of motion will involve an evaluation of a proposed action, usually a policy proposal. In debates about these kinds of motions, a very clear “model” may be helpful because it can offer a rather specific examination of the kind of action the First Government team is prepared to support. The specification of what the First Government team will defend is provided in terms of its “model” of the motion. The “model” is, as its name implies, is not a statement of the motion as a whole, but of the focused specification that the Government team will defend with regard to the overall motion.

In general, a model of this kind will involve three specifications: 1) who is the proposed actor? In some cases, the proposed actor is named in the motion, e.g. the People’s Republic of China. Even so, the First Government team may decide to further specify who ought to take action? Should action be taken by a municipality? By members of a family? By the provincial government? By members of a club or organization? By the central government? As stated earlier, the Prime Minister may want to explain why the First Government team has decided to specify a particular actor. 2) What are the essential elements of the proposed action? The First Government team needs to describe the broad details of the proposed action. Because time is limited in most debates, the model can only describe the most essential elements of the proposal, not the fine details. Because of time constraints, the Government Team can only outline its plan, but it should be ready to provide greater explanation if required later in the debate. 3) What are other elements of the proposal such as details of implementation needed to make the proposal feasible? These elements may include how the plan will be funded, how the plan will be enforced, how various agencies in the plan are expected to work together, etc. Because the Government team has limited time, it cannot present these elements in great detail. By briefly describing these three elements of their model, the Government team makes clear what it intends to advocate and defend during the entirety of the debate. A model is an aid to help all four teams focus the debate on more specific issues in order to have a good, clear debate.

In some cases, even when the motion is about a policy, a specific motion may be unnecessary. Sometimes the motion is so clear and unambiguous that specifying a particular course of action may be redundant with restating the motion. For instance, a motion that states simply “The PRC should abolish capital punishment” may be so clear that further specification of a model is completely unnecessary.

Thus, whether by a model or simply by a clear statement, this second First Government is needed to help focus the remainder of the debate on a particular position that the
Government team will advocate. The basic responsibility of the Prime Minister in this step is to clarify the position to be advocated by the First Government team and as a result, the position that will be the focus of the rest of the debate.

**Creating Arguments to Support Government’s Interpretation of the Motion**

The final step in creating a case for the motion is the most substantive—creating arguments to support the Government team’s interpretation of the motion. As stated earlier, a case can include one or more arguments in support of the Government's interpretation. Usually the case will consist of two or three arguments. More than three arguments may mean that the Prime Minister does not have adequate time to develop each argument.

Creating arguments is the most important step in creating a case because it focuses the debate on the reasons for accepting the motion. These arguments are the substance of the case for the motion.

The process of constructing arguments was described in Chapters 8 and 9. In those chapters, the notions of principles and consequences were discussed along side of methods that can be used to combine arguments coherently to create arguments for and against the proposition. This discussion will not be repeated in this chapter, so debaters who still may be unclear about how to create arguments may need to review Chapters 8 and 9.

This chapter, following the principles from Chapters 8 and 9, will create two rather complete outlines of cases that might be made by the Prime Minister. These outlines can be used as examples by beginning or experienced students of a way to create a case. The first outline involves a case supporting a motion of value and the second will involve a case supporting a motion of policy.
Introduction

**Motion for debate:** “Traditional Chinese medicine has an important place in overall health care.”

**Definition and interpretation:**
“Traditional Chinese Medicine” is defined as having a tradition of over 2000 years. The tradition includes herbal medicine, massage, acupuncture and other non-invasive techniques. Traditional Chinese Medicine is interpreted for the purposes of this debate as acupuncture because it is so central to TCM.

“Important place in overall health care” is interpreted to mean that TCM is one of a range of options that should be included in health care. We are not saying it is the only option that should be available, just one appropriate method.

**Statement of advocacy:** As the Government, we will argue that acupuncture is one technique that deserves a place in the overall system of health care. We do not argue that it is the only, or even the most important technique, simply that it is one important technique.

**Speech preview:**
During the remainder of this speech, I will present two arguments: 1) that acupuncture is a useful technique for certain conditions and 2) that acupuncture is not harmful to patients. My colleague the Deputy Prime Minister will then argue that acupuncture will help to eliminate unnecessary surgery.

**Argument 1: Acupuncture is a useful technique for certain conditions**
- Sub-claim 1
- Sub-claim 2
- Sub-claim 3

**Argument 2: Acupuncture is not harmful to patients**
- Sub-claim 1
- Sub-claim 2
- Sub-claim 3

**Conclusion**
As can be seen from the outline above, the actual Prime Minister speech has a few features not mentioned before. For instance, this speech, and all other speeches in the debate should begin with an introduction. One of the main purposes of the introduction is to establish the credibility and competence of the speaker. In most cases, the debater is speaking to a judge or audience who is not familiar with the debater and thus does not have much information about him or her. By beginning with a strong introduction, the debater can communicate an image of competence. Because first impressions are frequently long-lasting impressions, making a good first impression in the beginning of the speech is important. The introduction can be short, lasting ordinarily no more than 30 seconds.

After the introduction, the debater will ordinarily state the motion for debate then present the First Government team’s definitions and interpretations of that motion. As stated earlier, the definitions and interpretations are important because they set the stage for the rest of the debate. As important as this part of the speech is, it can be accomplished quite well in a short period of time, usually 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Before actually getting to the case, the Prime Minister will ordinarily offer a statement of advocacy and preview of his or her speech in terms of naming the arguments to be presented. Following the preview, the debater will present an advocacy statement to crystalize the approach the First Government is taking so that everyone will be clear about the focus of the debate. The purpose of the advocacy statement and preview is to set the arguments clearly in the mind of the judge so the judge will recognize the arguments when they are presented. Presentation of the preview and advocacy statement takes very little time, no more than 30 seconds.

The above is a typical outline of a Prime Minister speech on a motion of value. A Prime Minister speech on a policy motion contains similar categories but has some subtle differences. An outline of a speech on a motion of policy is included below:
Outline of a Prime Minister Speech Supporting a Policy Motion

Introduction

**Motion for debate:** “The United Nations should adopt a Declaration of the Rights of Great Apes.”

**Definition and interpretation:**

“Great Apes” are defined as chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans. The definition of a “Declaration of the Rights of Great Apes” is the one adopted by the Great Apes Project that includes the rights to life, protection of individual liberty, and protection from torture.

The Government interprets this motion to mean that the UN should adopt a declaration stating that all Great Apes have the right to life, liberty, and protection from torture.

**Statement of advocacy:** The Government model of this motion is as follows: 1) the actor is the United Nations, 2) the action proposed is a declaration of the rights of Great Apes, 3) the action should be enforced by UN peacekeepers to the extent enforcement is needed.

**Speech preview:**

During the remainder of this speech, I will present two arguments: 1) the Declaration of the Rights of Great Apes should be adopted as a matter of the principle of liberty and 2) that the Declaration of the Rights of Great Apes is financially beneficial. My colleague the Deputy Prime Minister will then argue that the declaration of the Rights of Great Apes is scientifically beneficial.

**Argument 1: Declaration of Rights of Great Apes is in accord with the principle of liberty.**

Sub-claim 1
Sub-claim 2
Sub-claim 3

**Argument 2: Declaration of Rights of Great Apes is scientifically beneficial because of the biological differences between humans and Great Apes.**

Sub-claim 1
Sub-claim 2
Sub-claim 3

Conclusion
As can be seen by examining the previous outline, the Prime Minister’s speech on a motion of value is not that different from a speech on a motion about policy. Some differences as well as similarities between this speech and the last are worth noting. First, both speeches contain an introduction, statement of the motion for debate, definitions and interpretations. The statement of advocacy is different in the policy motion because it specifies a model including the actor and action to be taken that was not necessary in the value motion.

Both speeches should contain a preview of the main arguments that each of the speakers will be expecting and obviously both speeches will include substantive arguments in support of the Government interpretation of the motion. Thus, the speeches are more alike than different but still contain subtle differences.

The previous section of this chapter dealt in general with arguments for the First Government team but particularly by the Prime Minister’s speech. The next section will focus on the speech to be given by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Role of the Deputy Prime Minister

In some ways, the Deputy Prime Minister provides a supporting role for the Prime Minister but serves an independent role as well. The Deputy Prime Minister needs to accomplish the following in his or her speech: 1) refute arguments presented by the Leader of Opposition, 2) support the arguments provided by the Prime Minister, and 3) provide at least one additional argument in support of the motion as interpreted by the Prime Minister.

First, the Deputy Prime Minister should refute arguments presented by the Leader of Opposition. Refutation is the topic of Chapter 15 and this process will be more fully discussed there. For now, suffice it to say that the Deputy Prime Minister should challenge the best of the arguments offered by the Leader of the Opposition. Refutation is an important part of the speech, but the Deputy Prime Minister should not devote a majority of speech time to this process. Although the amount of time used in refutation of the Leader of Opposition’s argument will vary according to the situation, that process probably should not more than 1 or 2 minutes. Debaters need to remember that devoting time to an opponent’s argument, although a necessary feature of a good debate speech, also gives added credibility to that opponent’s argument.

Second, the Deputy Prime Minister should support the arguments presented by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will have already presented 1 or 2 arguments in support of the motion as he or she interpreted it. Then the Leader of Opposition will in all likelihood have refuted those arguments. The role now for the Deputy Prime Minister is to rebuild those original arguments. This process of rebuilding the Prime Minister’s arguments must include refutation of the Leader of Opposition’s arguments that were raised against them. So the process might unfold something like this: the Deputy Prime Minister will very briefly review the Prime Minister’s argument then state the Leader of Opposition’s objections.
Then the Deputy will refute those arguments raised by the Leader of Opposition and in so doing will rebuild the Prime Minister’s argument. This process of supporting the arguments raised by the Prime Minister is an important one. Judges and audiences alike have the right to assume that the arguments raised by the Prime Minister are among the most important arguments the First Government team will make. If those arguments are refuted by the Leader of Opposition then not supported again, the arguments will lose a considerable amount of their credibility.

Finally, the Deputy Prime Minister should add at least one new argument to the debate—an argument that is different from, yet supportive of the arguments presented by the Prime Minister. The purpose of this new argument is to demonstrate that the Deputy Prime Minister takes more than a supportive role in that debate—that he or she is able to construct independent arguments as well as to refute and support previous arguments. Methods of making new arguments may follow the same methods as discussed in Chapters 8 and 9 and used by the Prime Minister.

Summary

This chapter has focused on how the First Government team creates arguments in support of their interpretation of the motion. Because of its importance in the overall debate, much of the focus has been on the speech of the Prime Minister. The chapter introduced the components of the First Government case, including defining and interpreting the motion, clarifying and specifying the position the First Government will advocate and defend, and constructing a series of arguments to support the case.

Then the chapter focused briefly on the role of the Deputy Prime Minister. That role includes refuting arguments offered by the Leader of the Opposition, supporting arguments made by the Prime Minister, and constructing independent arguments to support the Prime Minister’s interpretation of the motion.