

## Monash Asian Studies Debating Competition

### Topic guide and resources

*Please note: this guide should not dictate your team's approach to preparation – it just provides suggestions for your research. You should look widely for resources – local and university libraries will be especially helpful.*

#### Round 1

#### **“That India should abandon affirmative action based on caste”**

The caste system (jati) has been part of India's social structure for thousands of years. Members of lower castes experience systematic discrimination and have consistently less access to resources.

When India became independent, 70 years ago, its government implemented a quota (or “reservation”) system for members of disadvantaged castes. Despite this system, members of lower castes still find themselves in lower social positions; at the same time, protests about caste quotas have become very intense.

This debate requires the teams to think about whether an affirmative action system based on caste is beneficial for India.

#### *Questions for consideration*

- How effective has caste-based affirmative action been? How can its success be measured?
- Is affirmative action practically and ethically justifiable?
- Should affirmative action be based on measures other than caste, such as income, residential location, or religion?
- How has the Indian public responded to caste-based affirmative action? Does this affect whether it should be implemented?

#### *Resources*

- A summary of the caste system: <http://asiasociety.org/education/jati-caste-system-india>
- The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy on affirmative action: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/affirmative-action/>
- The effect of the caste system (an opinion article): <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/15/india-caste-system-70-anniversary-independence-day-untouchables>
- The Sachar Committee Report on minorities in India: <http://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/reports/sachar-committee-report>
- Articles relating to 2015 protests about caste quotas: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/28/asia/india-gujarat-caste-protests/index.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/31/world/asia/caste-quotas-in-india-come-under-attack.html?mcubz=1>, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34082770>

- Critiques of caste quotas:  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/affirmative-action-india-150829083614239.html>
- Growing income inequality in India:  
<http://blogs.umb.edu/amitbasole/2015/08/31/income-inequality-in-india-insights-from-the-world-top-incomes-database/>

## Round 2

### **“That the West should launch airstrikes against nuclear facilities in North Korea”**

North Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or DPRK) has been a “pariah state” for many years. It is well known for its hostility to most other nations, particularly those in the Western world. Combined with this, its development of nuclear facilities has caused much concern.

Both individually and collectively, many states have attempted to negotiate with North Korea, particularly through sanctions, trade, and diplomatic discussion. These have had only a limited effect on North Korea’s political and social system.

In recent times, both the United States of America (through President Trump) and North Korea (through Chairman Kim Jong-un) have made aggressive statements and threatened stronger military intervention.

In this debate it will be important to follow developments in the news closely.

#### *Questions for consideration*

- What is wrong with North Korea and its government? What would be a desirable long-term outcome for North Korea and the world?
- Does North Korea have the right to a nuclear program? What are the risks of this?
- Who is “the West” and how would they facilitate airstrikes? Do they have the right to do so?
- What would be the effect of airstrikes on North Korean nuclear facilities? How could risky situations be minimised?
- How successful have alternative methods of dealing with North Korea been?

#### *Resources*

- An interview with Andrei Lankov, an expert on North Korea, about its current situation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtQS3uV3qjs>
- Background report on North Korea’s military capacity (including nuclear capacity): <https://www.cfr.org/background/north-koreas-military-capabilities>
- Recent diplomatic clashes between the US and North Korea: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-southkorea-bombers-idUSKCN1B4OMP>
- An overview of American sanctions on North Korea: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource->

[center/sanctions/Programs/pages/nkorea.aspx,](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/08/22/545359332/trump-administration-unveils-new-sanctions-to-curb-north-korea-s-weapons-program)  
<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/08/22/545359332/trump-administration-unveils-new-sanctions-to-curb-north-korea-s-weapons-program>

- Discussion of “preventive war” in North Korea:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/20/world/asia/north-korea-war-trump.html>

### Round 3

#### “That tourism to developing countries in South-East Asia should be encouraged”

The United Nations has designated 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Tourism to countries in South-East Asia (such as Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma) has increased rapidly over the past two decades. Tourists have been able to visit previously inaccessible places for a low price, and there have been beneficial effects on local economies.

However, it has also been argued that tourism is detrimental to society and the environment, as well as not necessarily being sustainable as a means of economic growth. Harms to tourists and the ethics of visiting states which are often repressive and undemocratic are also areas of contention.

#### *Questions for consideration*

- What would encouraging or discouraging tourism to these countries involve?
- What are the shared characteristics of developing countries in South-East Asia (eg society, political structure, geography, culture)?
- What are the benefits of tourism to tourists? What are the risks?
- In the countries being visited, who benefits from tourism? Are the benefits spread evenly?
- What effect does tourism have on the governance of developing countries? Can tourism help improve governance?

#### *Resources*

- Official website of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development: <http://www.tourism4development2017.org/>
- World Tourism Organisation report on tourism in South-East Asia: <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2013-04-29/unwtotourism-australia-report-highlights-potential-south-east-asian-outbound>
- World Travel and Tourism Council report on economic impacts of tourism in South-East Asia: <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/regions-2017/southeastasia2017.pdf>
- Dangers to tourists in Thailand: <https://www.uts.edu.au/about/uts-business-school/management/news/saving-face-and-promoting-tourist-safety-se-asia>, and in Laos: <https://theconversation.com/fatal-attraction-young-australians-travelling-on-the-edge-5436>

- Benefits (<http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p99101/mobile/ch13s02.html>) and detriments (<https://kyotoreview.org/issue-2-disaster-and-rehabilitation/ecotourism-in-vietnam-potential-and-reality/>) of “ecotourism”.
- “Tourism no panacea for undemocratic countries”:  
<http://uopnews.port.ac.uk/2016/11/28/tourism-no-panacea-for-undemocratic-countries/>