

THESIS STATEMENTS AND PROMPTS

1. Civilization is a relative term. The very idea of it came from the West. If civilization were an absolute idea, the Age of Imperialism would have never happened since European observers would have seen that the empires of India and China were civilizations in their own right. Explain whether you agree or disagree with this statement.
2. “The Truth is one, but the sages call it by many names.” Explain this Hindu aphorism by discussing its ethos, and present a possible interpretation of it by discussing key insights from the Axial Age.
3. The Asian continent was home to rich, thriving civilizations that traded, interacted, and challenged each other even way before the coming of the West. It was a lush, interconnected world that was beyond the comprehension of Western minds at that time.
4. The China we see today is a product of its deep past. The general passivity of the populace and the dominance of the Communist Party can be explained by looking at their traditional Confucian *ethos*.
5. Given their cultural and religious diversity, as well as their own struggles against imperialism, democracy is the only form of government possible in India.
6. While observing the various states in the Middle East, political scientist Samuel Huntington wrote that “Islam has bloody borders.” Explain how he could have arrived at this assessment, and tell me whether you think that is a fair judgment to make.
7. One factor that the Middle East Summit left out was religion. Discuss how the game and metagame would have been affected if faith was a factor in the summit. Would that make coming up with a solution easier or more difficult? Explain the role of religion in politics and how belief affects a person’s ability to negotiate and compromise.
8. One criticism about ASEAN is that it doesn’t have enough power to affect real change in its own member countries. (Just take a look at Myanmar.) And the origin of this weakness, some say, is the policy of non-interference. Given the scope of our challenges as both individual countries and as a region, do you think that more could be achieved if non-interference is removed from the ASEAN Charter?
9. “Diplomat: A person who can tell you to go hell in such a way that you actually look forward to the trip.” – Caskie Stinnet via Joy Tirol-Ignacio. Explain this in light of your own experiences in SS2.
10. In sociology, ethos is defined as ‘the distinctive character, spirit, and attitudes of a people, culture, or era.’ Moreover, ethos is the root word of ethics, a system of standards, behaviours and norms. Explain how mankind moved from ethos to ethics using everything you’ve learned from civilization to religion, from imperialism, nationalism to globalization.