



# Essay Form

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Country:

Philippines

Theme: The roles of my country and of Asia in the future.

Length: Maximum of 1,000 words

Language: English

## Today's Fight for Tomorrow

One step forward, two steps back. Is the Philippines really moving forward?

Today, instability looms in my country, the Philippines, and in other countries around the world as more conflicts arise. The country's traffic crisis is getting worse. Bilateral talks with China over the Panatag Shoal are degenerating as China disregards the arbitration initiated in accordance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The country's relations with the United States and the United Nations are on the rocks. People are starving in Africa while the rest of the world looks away. Syrians are fleeing from violence as the United States' and Russia's negotiations are failing. Climate change is happening and yet people continue to emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Despite all these issues, it seems that no one cares.

The economy is going down because of the country's traffic crisis. According to a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) study, the government is losing three billion pesos a day due to traffic alone. Improvement of infrastructures is needed. Furthermore, as a solution to the economy's instability, the Philippines, as the Pearl of the Orient, is harnessing its natural resources extensively and rationally.

To enable the country to manage the country's resources inclusively, its sovereignty should be respected. It turns out that China has territorial controversies with Japan – over the Senkaku Islands – and with India – over the Sina-India border. All parties should find a common round and talk things out with diplomacy.

In addition to these civility issues, President Rodrigo Duterte's recent pronouncements have caused dissonance with the country's relationship with the United States and the United Nations. His swearwords, threats and accusations do not bid well for the country's future relations with the two.

Instead of severing ties with trusted allies, the Philippines should focus on strengthening relationships with neighboring countries and global organizations. These organizations include the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN-China Free Trade Act (ACFTA). To be able to lessen poverty through increased economic standing, active participation on programs related to these organizations, like the country's hosting of the ASEAN meeting next year, should be prioritized.

These ties are essential in resolving environmental issues. Presently, the entire globe is facing pollution-induced climate change. Science and Technology prove to be beneficial through the electrically-charged vehicles. Last December, the Paris Agreement bridged 195 countries including the Philippines to commit to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 70% by 2020 in order to limit global warming to 2°C.

There are also conflicts between cultures. People of color, citizens of minor races, believers of different religions--many are receiving hate and abuse plainly because they are different. Asia is the definition of diversity. As a continent brimming with different languages and cultures, Asians are more accustomed to accepting geographically and culturally varied subjects. We should use this advantage to reach out to other continents. The Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), previously known as the Association of Asian Parliament for Peace (AAPP), is one of the councils which promotes peace in the Asian region and in general. After all, everyone should learn how to accept and embrace each other's differences and achieve *unity in diversity*.

It may look like no one cares but, in reality, it turns out that there are organizations all over the world who are working together to face today's issues. It is not that no one cares about the challenges humanity is facing right now. It is not that no one is doing something about issues that are of importance. It is that I am not aware of other institutions doing their best to lessen the number of people dying every day. However, I learned that there are leaders establishing connections with other countries in order to improve the living conditions of their people. I am now aware that there are citizens bullied, abused and even killed, while I sit here wondering why no one is doing anything.

It is my role, therefore, as a Filipino high school student, to share what I have realized to be true: in the words of our National hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, "The youth is the hope of our future." The youth's roles to wonder, to search and to speak must go on! I am a part of this digital generation! I am a digital native, a regular user of the social media! In fact, we, not just I nor my fellow youth, but the middle-aged, the senior citizens, *all of us*, are a part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution!

With the technological advantages we have today, it is our role to spread awareness and inspire positive actions, to encourage people to join organizations and engage in programs regarding today's glaring world problems. It is our role to form bonds, to strengthen and nurture the relationships that the past and present leaders of our countries have established and are still establishing.

As an outcry, we have voiced out *#BlackLivesMatter* on the World Wide Web before, which had trended and evoked online social justice. Remember, we are one but we are not one. We can't do everything but we can do *something*.

This is not about one country vying for the highest position. This is about humanity's fight. This is a war: a war against poverty, climate change, injustice and corruption. This is a battle, a long, hard one. We are not the first ones to take up arms against this. Our predecessors have clashed against the same problems in their prime and had done what they could. It is our turn to lead now. The swords of nationalism and the torches of knowledge and wisdom are our weapons; they're now passed on to us so that we may take more steps forward toward the ultimate goal: world peace.