



EssayForm

Student Name:	Loh Jonina
Country:	Republic of Singapore
Theme:	The roles of my country and of Asia in the future.
Length:	Maximum of 1,000 words
Language:	English

A world in transition

For the last two hundred years, the world was largely defined by the West. However, today there is much talk about a gradual but inexorable global transition of power and ideas from the West to the East. The 21st century has been dubbed the “Asian Century”, with Asian economies, politics and cultures projected to dominate.

Asia should seize this chance to take up the mantle in advancing a liberal economic order amongst other areas it is developing a comparative advantage in, such as science and technology – these will be instrumental in tackling the economic, environmental and social issues plaguing our society today and in the future.

Looking towards the uncertain future, what is certain is that my country, Singapore can help to mitigate the abovementioned challenges and even turn them into opportunities by expanding its role as a base for Asian social, political and economic research and as a model of environmental sustainability.

The thorny issue of inequality

Income inequality is still rampant and rising in many parts of the world, hindering long-term economic development, poverty reduction and causing social tension. Asian countries should act as a promoter of inclusive economic growth not just for their citizens, but for the wider region as well.

Within countries, governments should effectively execute redistributive fiscal policy and strengthen measures ensuring that people have the necessary skills to succeed regardless of their background. For example, Singapore and Myanmar launched the Singapore-Myanmar Vocational Training Institute (SMVTI) in 2016 to help Myanmar upgrade and train its workforce. By expanding such vocational training to give students practical skills they need for work, people from rural areas have better chances of employment after graduation. This, in addition to implementing progressive tax rates and improving the access of low-income groups to education and healthcare will help alleviate poverty by increasing the incomes of the poor.

Among countries, developed Asian economies can become providers of indispensable foreign capital and innovation to help developing nations around the world reach their economic potential. An exemplary model would be Japan ramping up Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in developing economies such as Cambodia and Nigeria. Major firms like Mitsubishi readily transfer advanced technology and skills in emerging sectors (i.e. robotics and 3D printing), upgrading the technological capabilities of these countries and increasing their competitiveness.

Making environmental sustainability a reality

As the President of the United States denounces scientific evidence of global warming's deleterious effects, intending to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, Asian countries like China and Japan with the political will and technological means are set to fill the power vacuum as leaders of the global environmental effort. Ensuring that environmental protection and economic growth can be simultaneously attained is one of the more effective ways of encouraging the Invisible Hand to achieve this. For example, China's One Belt, One Road global initiative has accrued more than US\$900 billion in planned investments, of which a significant proportion will be dedicated to renewable energy projects in the developing world, considering that the six of the top ten solar panel suppliers are Chinese. While China and other Asian countries are currently the world's biggest polluters, industrial

reform is underway, and the turnaround of such influential powers in the global economy could significantly cut down total carbon emissions.

Beyond direct investment in eco-friendly solutions, Asian economies can also be exemplars for achieving long-term goals such as gender equality and education for women in rural areas. Since there is an inverse relationship between education levels and fertility rates, a slower population growth and more educated, more environmentally conscious citizenry will help us reduce the rate at which we consume our limited resources.

Singapore: an Asian base for scientific, social, political and economic research

While the world is transitioning into a knowledge-based economy in which information and technology is highly valued, a globally respected base for scientific, social, political and economic research to facilitate this exchange of knowledge has yet to be established. Singapore has a unique combination of features which make it especially suitable for becoming the regional research hub. An open city-state with advanced technological capabilities, and already home to internationally respected educational institutions such as the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore also boasts a multi-cultural, highly educated and highly productive workforce proficient in English, the international language of business.

There are many benefits to be reaped from making knowledge sharing easier. For example, it builds up economies and trust between participating countries which helps to establish Asia as a sustainable economic entity.

Singapore: a model of environmental sustainability

In recent decades, Singapore has positioned itself as a 'Living Laboratory' for local and foreign companies to develop and test innovative environmental solutions on its national urban infrastructure before scaling up to larger markets in Asia and the rest of the world. This role Singapore plays in contributing to sustainable development at the global level is likely to become even more important in the near future. For example, Punggol Eco-Town in Singapore is currently used by Panasonic to test its Total Energy Solution which involves the integration of solar systems, home energy management systems and energy-efficient

air-conditioning amongst other components. If successful, this could be implemented in other countries around the rest of the world, enabling the expansion of environmentally friendly and economically viable solutions to mitigate global warming.

Dealing with an ambiguous future

Although I have made such lofty predictions for my country and region, I believe that it is important for all of us to have some humility in advancing our roles. It is difficult to definitively say that Singapore and Asia will be the leaders of tomorrow, for the shadow of Ozymandias looms unseen but omnipresent over every human endeavor, biding its time.

However, there is still much hope. Within one or two generations it is possible for science and technology to advance beyond our wildest imaginations. Through programs such as the Toshiba Youth Club Asia, deeper relationships between the next generation of leaders can be fostered which will be instrumental in using these new solutions to tackle the challenges of our future.

979 words (without headers)

1015 words (with headers)