

General Paper – Essay Model

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Topic: Development

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'Developing countries must welcome change, not resist it.' To what extent is this good advice?

Sudan. Tired, the feeble dark child squats down and rests her head on her tiny hands. Her malnourished body is barely 2 times the size of her head. The vulture has been tailing her as she struggles in her journey to the feeding center for her meal. Having waited for 20 minutes, Kevin Carter decided to press the shutter on his camera. Perhaps if Sudan had rid itself of civil strife, or grew sufficient crops to feed its people, Kevin Carter would not have made a tidy sum from that photo that upset the developed world. For most developing countries, it seem that they are in a state where the only conceivable change is a turn for the better and economists urge them to welcome that 'improvement' from their stagnation. Unfortunately, while these areas of squalor, poverty and war are stagnating in economic rut, to welcome 'change', is hardly good advice. Evidently, 'change' can be in both directions and what the developing countries need is 'positive change'. In the course of history, these nations have barely been able to resist change and these transformations forced upon them by the developed world often end up disastrously, sometimes even making their way into explanations of their plight today.

To evaluate the advice, we must first put 'change' into perspective. To the developed world, the scope for 'change' in the developing world invariably lies in the privatization of industries, the opening of economies to trade, the establishment of democracy. The west expounds these valorized ideals as if they are the roots of all the problems in the developing world. The mismatch in the true roots of developing countries' problems and the solutions, which are often forced upon them, ends with catastrophe. Nonetheless, resisting change has never been a true option for the developing countries and thus, a better advice would probably be that 'Developing countries must welcome positive change, not mere change'.

The change to liberalize markets rarely produces the desired effects or solves any of the developing world's problems. Nationalized industries in developing world serves extremely important functions and while they may not be efficient and could even be corrupt, they maintain the workings of the third world societies. Privatization often meant that these industries are auction off to the richest of the population, who abides by the free market and have no concern about meeting the locals' needs. As a result, the prices of the goods produced by these industries soar, making them unaffordable to locals, stultifying the operations of the society. For the market liberalization change to be a positive one, it is necessary for the vital industries to be places in correct hands and with regulations in place to prevent exploitations of the consumers. The move has to be gradual and every step must be treaded with caution to avoid any sort of abuse. Sole 'change' is insufficient, they have to be careful, incremental and more importantly, positive.

Opening economies to trade was, in principle, rarely considered a negative change but the way trade have been carried out have dealt a serious blow to the developing nations who have been forced into opening up their economies. That blow was 'unfair trade', where developed countries subsidize their exports to the third world and erect protectionist barriers to keep out developing nation's alleged 'dumped' goods. The double standards that World Trade Organization (WTO) has applied on the trade liberalization in the developing and the developed world has angered the third world. Opening one's economy to gain the fruits of specialization and exchange have never been disputed but because the flow of goods was uneven and more or less directed by the first world governments rather than the market, the developing countries are unable to enjoy growth in their export sectors. Trade liberalization is one of the change the developing countries must embrace but to ensure that the change is positive, they will have to rally for their rights in the WTO and pressure the first world to stop the 'unfair trade' practices.

Establishment of democracy is probably the most controversial change that the developed world often tries to effect on the developing countries. Often, not only is the western democracy an unsuitable model for the developing world, a weak democracy in these countries prone to violence is much worst than a dictatorship. In fact, the whole idea of a foreign power intervening in the politics of another nation is never welcomed as a

positive change in itself and the cases of both Vietnam in the 1960s and Iraq in the recent years. The issue of political changes would have to be placed in the hands of the third world's population; a positive change would be more likely if the natives insist on taking charge of the change. If their system were not really working for the people, change would naturally be effected from within, with little resistance expected.

Having described so many pessimistic scenarios, I hope to assert that positive change do occur and have taken place in many developing countries who embraced the change that the west have been encouraging. Privatization had worked well for telecommunications in Kenya, thanks to licensing laws encouraging market competition as well. Kenyan farmers now have an easier time figuring out which market to head for selling their harvest where they would fetch the highest price. Such simple infrastructural innovation paves the way for further positive changes in the developing countries. Singapore's switch from import-substitution to export-driven economic policy proved to be a right move, only because of subsequent policy implementation that favours trade agreements (that secures trade relationships). Political change instituted by the developing countries themselves has proven to be positive as well. Ukraine enjoyed relative peace and stability from their embrace of democracy (from within) after the collapse of the Soviet Union and is now an emerging economy in Eastern Europe.

Resisting change is really an irrelevant idea in today's world and so it will really be a better idea to advise that developing countries welcome 'positive change' and not merely be satisfied with having changes. We have seen that powerful positive changes are possible and it is really the way the changes take place that matters.