

Essay Topics

Session 1: Socio-Political Structure: The Foundation of Development

A society has many rules or structures that govern the interaction within the society. Many aspects of the society can work towards our desired goal, or challenge it. For examples, formal structure in politics tells us how public decisions are made. It may be centralized or decentralized, autocratic or democratic. Political problem may delay the process of economic development. Social and cultural values play a role in shaping the society as well, for example, how some religious values promote or prevent economic growth. The quality of human capital inherited from previous generations could also make a difference with our development. This session aims to understand how socio-political factors affect the sustainable development. Potential discussion topics include:

- The effects of social and political factors to the development that persisted in the past
- The challenges of sustainable development from today's social and political environment
- Success or failure to overcome challenges in the past
- Possible roles of social institutions in future development

Session 2: Economic System: The Fuel of Prosperity

Economics has always played a crucial role in all human societies that ever existed, and especially now its importance is increasing as the capitalist system develops into more complicated forms and determines how the entire world is run. A good economic system should be able to allocate resources efficiently, be it human capital, commodities, or money. But the crises that the world had experienced in recent years prove too well that there exist serious problems in our current system, and it severely threatens sustainable growth of the world economy. Therefore, the urgent task at hand is to understand the causes of the problems, and make necessary adjustments to improve the system's efficiency and mitigate risks of future crises. Asia emerges as the West is entangled by severe problems, how can it learn from the West's mistakes and avoid such problems, to achieve its own path of sustainable growth? Potential discussion topics include:

- Soundness of financial system
- Role of the private sector and market competitiveness
- Role of international trade
- Role of government and central bank
- Growth engine: domestic or export led growth
- Social welfare and inequality

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Session 3: Environmental Management: The Path to Sustainable Future

Environment refers to our natural resources and environment. It is the basis for all development of mankind, but unfortunately it had often been abused and neglected. It blesses us with plenty of resources for our consumption and production, but sometimes it also punishes us with merciless disasters. Although some of its factors are unpredictable and uncontrollable, there is still much room for improvement: we can better manage it and keep it sustained for later generations. Several countries could be considered as a plethora of natural resources. Unfortunately, these resources are consumed irresponsibly. Energy is among the most important issues. How can we sustain a steady source of it to fuel our growing industrial world? Many efforts have been devoted to alternative sources, such as solar, nuclear, hydro, etc., but each has its pros and cons and trade-offs must be made. Another important issue is pollution, and its severe harm to society and our economy. The question is how can we adapt our ways to better suit, manage, and utilize the environment to benefit society in the long term. Potential topics include:

- Allocation of resources and regeneration
- Disaster management and how to reduce their impact on long-term growth path
- Alternative sources of energy: benefits and costs
- Pollution: its effect on livelihood and productivity
- Solutions for people's better health and its positive externalities on the economy
- Global warming