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| |  | | --- | | Some people believe it is imperative for individuals living in developed nations to reduce their energy consumption and lead a more sustainable lifestyle, given the evidence for global climate change. Others believe that such drastic lifestyle changes are unwarranted, based on the existing evidence for global climate change.  Write a response in which you discuss which view more closely aligns with your own position and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, you should address both of the views presented. | |

Climate change has been cited as one of humanity's biggest challenges since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, and the end of the World Wars. Developed countries are known to have used a lot of fossil fuels and non-renewable resources in reaching their current 'developed' status, but the developing countries of today have been working towards becoming developed in a more sustainable manner. The issue of whether people living in developed nations should live more sustainably is a complex one, and taking a strong stance on it is hard. In my opinion, I agree with the first view provided, albeit only to a certain extent; my reasoning for not 'fully' agreeing does not fall in line with what the second view expresses. There are three main things to consider in this conversation, that must be explored in further detail.

To begin, developed nations may have to compensate for their past use of non-renewable energy sources. It is true that developed nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom account for a significantly larger portion of the cumulative human carbon footprint, as compared to the rest of the countries combined, since the Industrial Revolution: This has been reflected in the evidence presented by most climate-change studies. This could be used as a reason to justify why such countries must adopt sustainable practices, purely out of a sense of responsibility. If developed countries do not adopt sustainable measures now, then how would they clear their conscience of the several tons of greenhouse gases that were released into the air for their development? Thus, this reason supports the first view. If developed countries such as the United States believe that they are responsible for ensuring the world's safety, they must take responsibility of their history of emissions in a comprehensive and meaningful manner.

One may respond to the previous point by saying, "The current state of global climate change is not caused by the individuals currently living in developed nations, so they do not have the responsibility of being sustainable. If anything, they inherited this blame." But this claim is not logically sound for the following reason: Citizens of developed nations (and the nation as an entity) are more likely to be able to afford to live sustainably, in a world where living sustainably is still quite unaffordable. Products such as 'Beyond Meat', that intend to decrease one's carbon footprint caused by meat consumption, attempt to do so with plant-based alternatives. Innovations like this are emerging in many developed nations, but are still costly, and hence, are generally less sought-after in the Third World. If anyone could help by shifting to a sustainable life style in this regard (via consumption habits), then it would be the developed countries. If sustainable products are subsidised by governments of these countries, and research in these areas is encouraged, only then can there be a possibility of these products becoming more affordable and accessible to the rest of the world. Individual decisions to consume sustainable alternatives, coupled with legislative/subsidy-based measures would help target climate change head-on. It may even inspire other nations to become more sustainable, once the associated costs are lower.

Finally, one must consider the gravity of the situation: Scientists around the world have provided ample evidence to prove that we are still headed towards a global temperature shift of +2 degrees Celsius. Beyond what was discussed in the previous points, developed countries have the resources to potentially even help developing countries move to sustainable ways of living. The First World may have caused a lot of environmental degradation, but turning a blind eye to the current situation, and not considering the harms climate change may put countries in, would lead to highly unfavourable results. The second view states that drastic changes are unwarranted, but climate scientists have time and again shown evidence to prove that large-scale change is necessary. Nihilism is perilous, and a dangerous path to go down.

In conclusion, I agree with the first view provided, albeit with some minor changes, such as a more top-down approach via legislative measures (government-based solutions), as well as individuals shifting to sustainable options if they are able to afford it. Based on all the existing evidence, I am of the opinion that the 'unwarrantedness' stated by the second view is plain irresponsible.