



# Beyond the “Great Divergence” Debate: What Have We Learned About the Origins of Modern Economic Growth?

The last 20 years have seen a new burst of interest in understanding when, where, and why sustained per capita income growth began – and, with that, in why Northwestern Europe became the first center of that growth. A series of systematic comparisons with East Asia and – to a lesser extent – South Asia – have suggested that this divergence happened later and more suddenly than we used to think, and cast doubt on some widely-believed explanations. No new consensus has yet been reached, but the range of disagreement about many of the relevant issues - systems of property rights, environmental factors, the role of warfare, and colonization, and the relationship of science to early industrialization – has narrowed considerably, placing both European and East Asian history in a new, more truly global perspective.

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