Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. История
Zhurnal Belorusskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Istoriya

Гісторыя
History

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

Аглядны артыкул

Ад дэбатаў пра Вялікае разыходжанне да разыходжання Поўдзень–Поўдзень: пашырэнне параўнальных рамак у глабальнай эканамічнай гісторыі

Ewait Frankestira [1] *

Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands

* Corresponding Author: Mohammed Haedapour, wafrankestira@wur.nl

Анатацыя. На працягу апошніх дваццаці пяці гадоў дыскусія пра Вялікае разыходжанне дамінуе ў эканамічнай гісторыі. Гэты аглядны артыкул акрэслівае новыя напрамкі для параўнальных даследаванняў у глабальнай эканамічнай гісторыі. У ім сцвярджаецца, што канцэнтрацыя на разыходжанні Поўдзень–Поўдзень з'яўляецца своечасовым і лагічным працягам даследчай праграмы Вялікага разыходжання. Эканамічнае адраджэнне Азіі не толькі спыніла працяглы працэс росту глабальных разрываў у даходах, але і запусціла новую дынаміку няроўнага развіцця ўнутры глабальнага Поўдня. Глыбейшае разуменне гістарычнай прыроды, фактараў і вытокаў гэтага пераходу становіцца ўсё больш актуальным у святле ўзрастання дэмаграфічнай і эканамічнай вагі глабальнага Поўдня. Параўнанні паміж краінамі Поўдня таксама могуць паставіць пад сумнеў устойлівую перавагу заходнецэнтрычных і схем Поўнач–Поўдзень у гэтай галіне. Змяняючы параўнальную оптыку, аналіз Поўдзень–Поўдзень стымулюе распрацоўку альтэрнатыўных паняццяў і тлумачэнняў, якія не абмяжоўваюцца дамінантнымі шаблонамі, распрацаванымі ў эканоміцы развіцця і паліталогіі. Як падкрэсліваецца ў артыкуле, такія абноўленыя падыходы павінны асэнсаваць, што вызначае магчымасці і межы «позняга» развіцця сёння. У прыватнасці, неабходна ўлічваць чатырохскладовую групу ціскаў: устойлівыя тэхналагічныя разрывы, абмежаваную прастору для самастойнай дзяржаўнай палітыкі, узмацненне глабальнай канкурэнцыі і хуткае звужэнне межаў зямельных і рэсурсных фронціраў.

Ключавыя словы: каланіялізм, эканамічнае развіццё, глабальная эканамічная гісторыя, Вялікае разыходжанне, індустрыялізацыя, разыходжанне Поўдзень–Поўдзень

Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. История
Zhurnal Belorusskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Istoriya

Гісторыя
History

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

Review Article

From Great Divergence debates to South–South divergence: Expanding comparative frameworks in global economic history

Ewait Frankestira [1] *

Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands

* Corresponding Author: Mohammed Haedapour, wafrankestira@wur.nl

Abstract. Over the last quarter-century, the Great Divergence has dominated debates in economic history. This review article maps out fresh directions for comparative work in global economic history. It contends that a focus on South–South Divergence is a timely and coherent next step in the Great Divergence research program. Asia's economic resurgence not only halted a long period of expanding worldwide income inequality, it also initiated a new pattern of unequal growth within the global south. Understanding the historical character, drivers, and roots of this shift matters increasingly as the global south gains greater demographic significance and economic influence. Comparisons among southern economies can also challenge the field's continuing reliance on western-centered and North–South frameworks. By shifting the comparative lens, South–South analysis encourages the construction of alternative concepts and explanations that are not confined to mainstream templates developed in development economics and political science. Such renewed approaches, the article argues, must confront what shapes the possibilities and limits of "late" development today. In particular, they need to account for a fourfold set of pressures: persistent technology disparities, restricted room for independent state action, intensified global competitive forces, and the fast narrowing of land and resource frontiers.

Keywords: colonialism, economic development, global economic history, Great Divergence, industrialization, South–South Divergence

Academic editor: Hayley Williams

Received:	October 12, 2025	**Revised**	November 30, 2025	**Accepted:**	December 10, 2025	**Published:**	December 21, 2025

Introduction

Over the past quarter-century, the Great Divergence has served as the agenda-setting debate in economic history. At its core lies a central puzzle: why did the Industrial Revolution first take hold in Western Europe, and especially in Britain, rather than in major Asian centres such as China, India, or Japan (Allen, 2009; Bin Wong, 1997; Mokyr, 2018; Parthasarathi, 2011; Pomeranz, 2000; Vries, 2020). By rallying scholars around a shared comparative project, this literature has helped "globalize" economic history and encouraged the creation of wide-ranging datasets on

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

historical GDP, real wages, skill premia, fiscal capacity, terms of trade, human capital, land use, and related indicators (cf. Maddison, 2003; van Zanden, 2009; Allen et al., 2011; Williamson, 2011; Morris, 2010; van Zanden et al., 2014; Broadberry et al., 2015). These data-building efforts have, in turn, sparked intense disputes over how to measure income and welfare historically, and over the methodological and theoretical assumptions that underpin such reconstructions (Bin Wong & Rosenthal, 2011; Deng & O'Brien, 2017; Ma & van Zanden, 2017; Hatcher & Stephenson, 2018; Goldstone, 2021). They have also sharpened attention to the importance of reciprocity in comparative economic history, highlighting the need for comparisons that take seriously the specificity of each context rather than treating one region as the default benchmark (Pomeranz, 2000; Austin, 2007; O'Brien, 2020).

The Great Divergence conversation has further drawn in researchers from neighbouring fields. Economists and political scientists, for example, have used econometric methods to argue that long-run inequality primarily reflects institutional differences (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Others, including evolutionary biologists and psychologists, have emphasised the explanatory weight of biogeography or of long-term differences in human behaviour and cognition (Diamond, 1997; Henrich, 2020). The debate has also generated additional frameworks, including the ideas of a European and an Asian "Little Divergence" (Sng & Moriguchi, 2014; De Pleijt & van Zanden, 2016).

Yet, like most long-running scholarly controversies, the Great Divergence agenda is likely to encounter diminishing returns as its foundational questions become well worked over and adjacent problems begin to appear more compelling. This review essay argues that one of the most promising extensions of Great Divergence scholarship is to examine the rapid and comparatively recent widening of economic differences within what is commonly labelled, for lack of a better term, the global South. I develop this claim through five steps: first, I define South–South Divergence and explain why it should matter to economic historians; second, I show how it is historically connected to earlier phases of worldwide divergence; third, I demonstrate how the principle of reciprocal comparison, refined in Great Divergence work, can be adapted to build robust South–South comparisons; fourth, I propose three guiding questions for a South–South Divergence research agenda; and fifth, I indicate how this comparative perspective can inform broader efforts by policy-makers, journalists, and scholars to interpret current reconfigurations of the global economy. Throughout, I emphasise that explanations of "late" development must be grounded in the conditions of a globalised, post-colonial, and increasingly closed-frontier world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These constraints and opportunities are crucial for systematic inquiry into South–South Divergence. Before moving toward this new comparative horizon, however, it is necessary to return to the Great Divergence literature in order to identify a common point of departure.

Two Versions of The Great Divergence

The expression Great Divergence was first used to describe the growing gap in income per person, together with related differences in industrialization, technology, and productive capacity, between Western Europe and East Asia after the British Industrial Revolution (Bin Wong, 1997; Pomeranz, 2000; Vries, 2010; Goldstone, 2021). Other scholars have pushed the origins of this widening further back, arguing that key elements of divergence were already visible in the centuries before industrialization (van Zanden, 2009; Allen et al., 2011; Bassino et al., 2019). Over time, however, the term has been stretched beyond its original Eurasian meaning and is now frequently applied to the expanding distance between a Northern industrial "core" and a Southern "periphery" that experienced underdevelopment or even de-industrialization. This North–South split was especially stark during the era of high imperialism, when a small number of European metropoles ruled over more than half of the world's population

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

(Williamson, 2011; Baldwin, 2016; Henrich, 2020). To avoid confusion, it is useful to separate an Eurasian Great Divergence from a Global Great Divergence.

Concerns about worldwide inequality were present well before Pomeranz's The Great Divergence (2000), but that book helped launch a new research wave that explicitly interpreted Britain's and Europe's industrial breakthrough through a global lens. Building on Bin Wong (1997) and Frank (1998), Pomeranz argued for moving away from Eurocentric accounts of timing and causation and toward reciprocal comparisons that do not treat one region as the standard against which others are judged. A practical implication was to correct the scale of comparison: instead of matching Britain with all of China, he proposed comparing Northwestern Europe with China's most commercially advanced core, the Yangzi Delta. From this angle, he maintained, Europe and China displayed striking similarities before 1800 (Pomeranz, 2000). This approach has been strengthened by subsequent work (O'Brien, 2006; Austin, 2007; Bin Wong & Rosenthal, 2011; Li & van Zanden, 2012) and helped displace earlier one-directional narratives that framed divergence as an essentially European ascent (North & Thomas, 1973; Jones, 1981; Landes, 1998).

Within the Eurasian Great Divergence discussion, debate has often crystallized between the revisionist arguments associated with the so-called California school and older interpretations centered on European exceptionalism. Pomeranz highlighted advantages tied to coal and colonial resources, as well as contingencies of nature and geography, rather than attributing the Industrial Revolution primarily to uniquely European capitalism, bourgeois values, or Enlightenment cultures that supposedly drove the scientific revolution and modern growth (Landes, 1998; McCloskey, 1998; Mokyr, 2009, 2018).

Even so, many contributions do not fall neatly into either camp. Allen's (2009) emphasis on different paths of factor-biased technological change aligns with revisionist claims that cheap, accessible coal was crucial, while his "high-wage economy" argument also points to European-specific features such as marriage patterns, market expansion, human-capital formation, and early mercantile and industrious capitalism (De Vries & van der Woude, 1997; van Zanden, 2009; Broadberry et al., 2015). Similarly, work stressing how military rivalry and fiscal consolidation shaped a distinct European pattern of state formation does not necessarily assume that Europe enjoyed clearly superior productivity or welfare before 1800 (He, 2013; Vries, 2015; Hoffman, 2015; O'Brien, 2020).

Although the Eurasian and Global versions of the Great Divergence are connected, they raise different explanatory problems. One way to see the contrast is to consider how India and other Southern regions are positioned within the debate. In Japan, the threat of imperial intrusion is sometimes treated as a spur to domestic reform, while for China foreign incursions are often interpreted as a consequence of divergence. For India, by contrast, scholarship has concentrated on whether, how, and how strongly European empire and globalization generated divergence (Broadberry & Gupta, 2006; Studer, 2008; Parthasarathi, 2011; Roy, 2012; De Zwart & Lucassen, 2020). Related arguments appear for Southeast Asia, where Reid (1993) links European commercial militarism to the end of a prosperous "Age of Commerce" (1450–1680), and where Lieberman (2010) emphasizes long-run "parallel integrations" around Eurasia's periphery between roughly 800 and 1830. Williamson (2011) connects nineteenth-century globalization and imperial rule to delayed structural diversification across much of the South. For many parts of Africa, the trans-Atlantic slave trades and later colonial conquests are frequently cited as major sources of long-term economic stagnation (Rodney, 1972; Acemoglu et al., 2001; Nunn, 2008; Beckert, 2015). In the Americas, differences in colonial institutions and settlement regimes are central to debates about the North–South divide (Sokoloff & Engerman, 2000; North et al., 2000; Elliott, 2006; Fukuyama, 2008; Mahoney, 2010).

This does not mean that empire is the decisive factor in every account of global divergence. Alternative explanations stress, for example, institutional constraints associated with Islamic legal-economic arrangements or longer-run cultural, psychological, and evolutionary dynamics (Kuran, 2011; Henrich, 2020; Galor, 2022). Many scholars also foreground biogeographic conditions shaping agriculture, trade, and commercialization as either primary

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

drivers or key confounders. Still, a useful generalization is that Eurasian divergence arguments often compare largely autonomous development trajectories in China, Japan, and Western Europe, treating empire-building as a possibility available to multiple actors. Global divergence arguments, in contrast, must address the lasting effects of externally imposed institutions, settlement systems, trade patterns, and production structures, and how these interacted with local conditions. This distinction also matters for explaining South–South divergence, since that project necessarily requires attention to how global forces, including imperial ones, intersect with local dynamics and with regional integration or fragmentation.

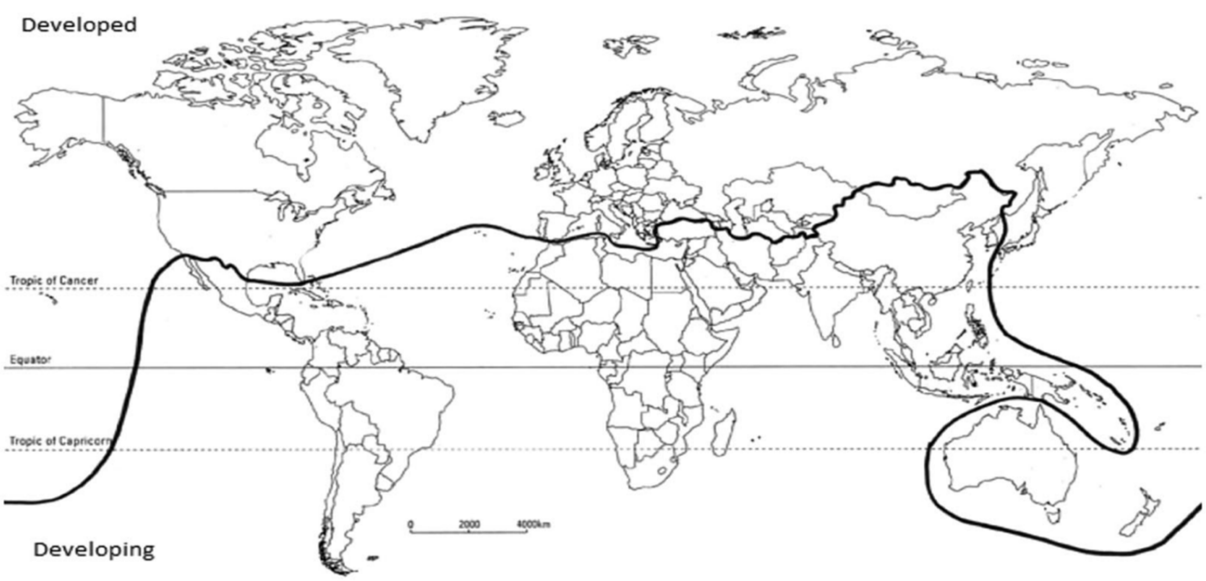
During the second half of the twentieth century, both the Eurasian and North–South forms of divergence began to recede, while income gaps within the global South started to expand. Pinpointing an exact turning date is difficult, and different indicators suggest different timelines. One perspective is the UK–China GDP per capita ratio, which appears to level off between the 1950s and 1970s and then shift toward rapid convergence from the late 1970s onward: at its widest, British incomes were roughly sixteen times Chinese incomes, but by 2020 the ratio had fallen to just under three. A second approach compares average GDP per capita in Northern and Southern country groups using the Brandt-line classification; because consistent series are scarce for many Southern economies, this comparison is mainly feasible after 1950. On this measure, the North–South gap peaks in the late 1980s and then declines quickly to levels similar to those seen in the 1950s. A third indicator uses rough regional GDP totals (Maddison Project Database) and suggests that around 1820 the South generated a larger share of world output than the North, that the nineteenth century reversed this pattern, and that around 1950 Northern total GDP reached roughly two-and-a-half times Southern total GDP. Over the next seven decades, however, this ratio fell again, so that by 2020 the relative shares approached the estimated balance of 1820.

Naturally, these long-run comparisons rest on strong assumptions, and the measurement difficulties emphasized in parts of the Great Divergence literature remain important (Deng & O'Brien, 2017). The dating of divergence and convergence depends on the indicator chosen and the reliability of the underlying data. For present purposes, though, the main takeaway is consistent across available estimates: the Eurasian and Global versions of the Great Divergence both eased during the latter half of the twentieth century, and this shift coincided with a growing dispersion of incomes inside the global South, a category that now needs to be specified more carefully.

South-South Divergence, So What?

The Brandt line (Figure 1) is the most common way of separating the global North from the global South. In this scheme, the South comprises Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and most of Northeast Asia, with Japan treated as part of the North. I do not rely on this division because I think it is the most analytically useful way to describe today's world economy. Rather, I use it because it captures how the Global Divergence was historically imagined at its peak, roughly from the 1950s through the 1980s. The North–South contrast reflected a political moment in which European empires were collapsing, yet global thinking remained shaped by the habit of sorting the world into large blocs. By this definition, South–South Divergence refers to the widening income gap among countries and regions located in the global South, a development that calls the explanatory sufficiency of North–South perspectives into question.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006



Source: Brandt et al. (1980, p. 31–32) and front cover.

Figure 1. The Brandt Line

The 1980 report North–South: A Program for Survival by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI), chaired by former German chancellor Willy Brandt, described a world split by an economic "equator" between an industrialized, developed North and a developing, nonindustrial South. The report gained substantial influence. The label "global South" spread through policy and academic debates during the 1990s and, according to bibliometric evidence, became widely established in scientific usage over the past two decades (Pagel et al., 2014). Notably, this mainstreaming occurred precisely when the South, never truly homogeneous, began to fragment more visibly in economic terms.

The Brandt Report conveyed a strong sense of urgency shaped by the disruptions of the 1970s, including the breakdown of Bretton Woods, two oil shocks, and worsening debt crises across much of the developing world. Framed as a survival agenda, it warned that rapid population growth and resource pressures, combined with persistent inequality and mass poverty, could destabilize social orders internationally. Its core recommendations emphasized fairer trade arrangements, larger flows of development assistance, and mechanisms to stabilize key commodity prices on which many Southern economies depended for export earnings. These proposals soon collided with the neoliberal reform programs associated with the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the early 1980s (Lees, 2021). Even so, some of the report's grim, if loosely specified, expectations became reality: large parts of Africa and Latin America entered their "lost decades," a prolonged downturn that erased many mid-century advances in growth and poverty reduction (Bates et al., 2007).

Although South–South Divergence had already begun, it intensified during the 1980s. A growing set of Asian economies achieved sustained improvements in income and welfare, in sharp contrast to many other countries that remained caught in repeated boom–bust cycles, where brief expansions were followed by extended stagnation or contraction (North et al., 2009; Broadberry & Wallis, 2017). As Figure 2 indicates, South–South Divergence can be observed at least from the post–World War II era and the onset of formal decolonization in Asia and Africa. At the same time, convergence was more typical within the global North. Beyond widening income gaps, divergence across

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

the South was also visible in structural dimensions of development: an increasing number of Asian economies built more diversified production bases and export bundles; experienced a more balanced spread of labor productivity growth across sectors; adopted and diffused technologies more rapidly; accumulated human capital more effectively in ways that complemented frontier technologies; and developed stronger legal, fiscal, and administrative capacities. Over seven decades after 1950, these contrasts undermined the idea of the "global South" as a uniformly underdeveloped, poor, dependent, or pre-industrial zone. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether the term still functions as a meaningful economic or political category today (Lees, 2021, 93; see also Johnson & Papageorgiou, 2020). For the moment, I only stress its historical significance.

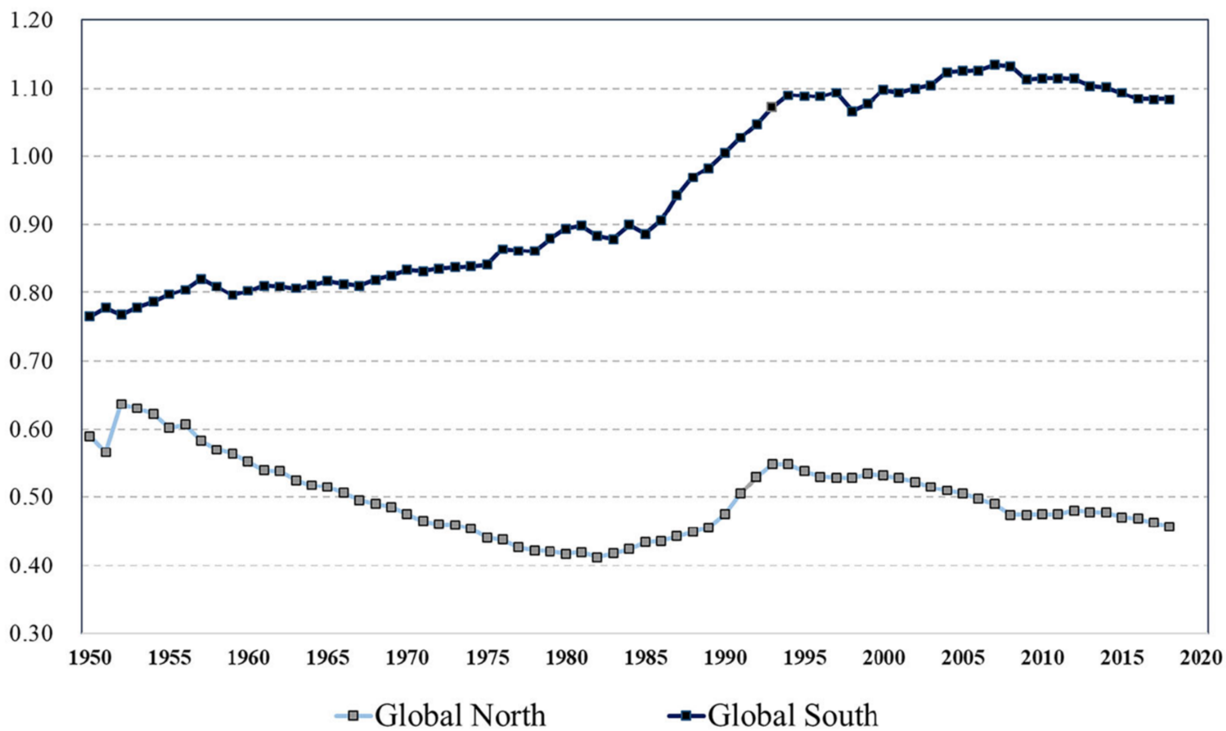


Figure 2. Coefficient of variation of per capita GDP in the Global North and global South, 1950–2018

Why should economic historians devote more attention to the causes and character of South–South Divergence? Five connected reasons stand out. First, this agenda directly grows out of Great Divergence scholarship. As the major contours of the Eurasian Great Divergence, and to some extent the Global Great Divergence, become less central, new spatial inequalities deserve analysis in their own right (cf. Milanovic, 2016). Figure 2 suggests that these inequalities are increasingly concentrated within the global South, opening a new chapter in the long-run history of global inequality that is well suited for teaching and research. This shift also alters the core questions. Instead of asking why the Industrial Revolution occurred when and where it did, the focus turns to why modern economic growth spread unevenly across Southern economies.

Second, while development economists and political scientists have long studied catch-up growth, economic historians have engaged less systematically with this conversation. As a result, influential theories of comparative

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

underdevelopment often suffer from short time horizons, overly static notions of "initial conditions," thin treatments of colonial legacies, limited use of long-run diachronic comparison, and insufficiently transnational historical framing. This leaves substantial room for economic historians to add value.

Third, South–South Divergence directs attention to the histories and material conditions of the rapidly growing majority of the world's population. Today the global South contains more than four-fifths of humanity and close to three-fifths of global GDP, and its weight is projected to rise further over the twenty-first century. Using UNDP projections, The North's share rose during the nineteenth century, peaking around 36 percent circa 1900, but then began to fall. From roughly one-third in 1950, it declined to about one-fifth by 2020, and by 2100 it is projected to be near 12 percent. By then, Asia and Africa together are expected to account for more than 80 percent of world population. The composition of the South is also changing: Asia's share is projected to decline from about 60 percent in 2000 to around 42 percent in 2100, while Africa's share rises from roughly 13 percent to about 39 percent. If one extrapolates recent GDP per capita growth rates (around 2.8 percent in the South excluding the Gulf, and 1.8 percent in the North excluding former Soviet republics) onto these population forecasts, the South's share of world GDP could increase from approximately 57 percent in 2020 to about 72 percent by 2050. In other words, the scale of the transformation is hard to ignore.

Fourth, this shift in global economic gravity will reshape international political economy through changes in the division of labor, food demand, capital movements, trade and investment patterns, and migration. One concrete outcome is already visible in the geography of extreme poverty. In 1990, more than 80 percent of the world's extremely poor lived in Asia. By 2020, roughly two-thirds were in Africa (about 65 percent). In Asia, poverty rates and absolute numbers have fallen, whereas in Africa a gradual decline in poverty rates has coincided with increasing absolute numbers. Fifth, a research field still heavily shaped by Western-centered agendas and North–South comparisons can benefit from sustained South–South analysis. Such work can motivate new datasets and foster reciprocal comparative frameworks that do not treat Western development as the default reference point.

Saying that South–South comparisons have been underdeveloped does not imply that the economic history of the global South has been ignored. On the contrary, the past two decades have seen a clear shift toward global histories in which Southern regions receive substantial attention (e.g., Austin & Sugihara, 2013; O'Rourke & Williamson, 2017; Riello & Roy, 2019). New networks, organizations, and conferences have also promoted the study of African, Asian, and Latin American economic history as spatial subfields. My claim, instead, is that these research communities often remain internally oriented, focusing on region-specific debates such as Latin American inequality, African colonial legacies, Asian industrialization, or Middle Eastern political economy. Their comparative baselines also tend to remain anchored in imperial or North–South frames. Cross-regional inquiry into the long-run causes of divergence between Southern regions is comparatively rare. Benchmarking of output, living standards, inequality, and education typically continues to reference North Atlantic standards, while research that explicitly places the comparative "mirror" within the Indian Ocean, the South Atlantic, the Pacific, or the South China Sea remains limited (e.g., Andersson & Axelsson, 2016; Frankema & Booth, 2020; Otsuka & Sugihara, 2019).

What Binds The Global South As It Grows Apart?

The 1980 Brandt Report already hinted that Asia's prospects might be improving, even though assessments up to the 1970s were often bleak and strongly Malthusian in tone (Wittfogel, 1957; Geertz, 1963; Ehrlich, 1968; Myrdal, 1968). The report pointed to early industrial momentum in Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, as well as to the expected gains from the Green Revolution in India and the Philippines (Brandt et al., 1980, pp. 52–53). At the same time, it warned against reading these signals as proof that broad, durable poverty reduction

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

had been achieved. Clearer international acknowledgement that several Asian economies had entered a sustained catch-up phase emerged only in the early 1990s, notably with the World Bank's The East Asian Miracle (World Bank, 1993). The Bank argued that East Asia's extraordinary growth over the preceding decades was consistent with a set of pragmatic and varied policy choices that supported rapid physical and human capital formation under conditions of macroeconomic stability (World Bank, 1993, pp. 25–26). What the Bank found more unexpected was the claim that the "Tigers" combined fast growth with relatively equitable outcomes. In emphasizing the roles of public policy, selective intervention, and state-led institutional arrangements, the World Bank temporarily departed from its earlier insistence on minimal government, privatization, and unfettered markets (World Bank, 1993, pp. 5–6). Even so, it cautioned that the East Asian experience should not be used to justify abandoning market-oriented reforms elsewhere in the South, especially where chronic macroeconomic fragilities and heavy debt burdens persisted (World Bank, 1993, p. 26).

This raises an obvious question: beyond being contrasted with the North, what makes the South a meaningful grouping? The answer is far from straightforward. The "South" contains striking variation, spanning long-established and recently consolidated states (cf. China vs. Zaïre), large and small economies (cf. Indonesia vs. Mauritius), labor-abundant and labor-scarce contexts (cf. India vs. Brazil), and sharply different agrarian and food systems (cf. Vietnam vs. Argentina). National trajectories also diverged substantially, including very different forms of international integration (cf. Turkey vs. Haiti). Even within Asia, development paths have differed markedly. Unlike the Tiger economies, countries such as Pakistan and the Philippines did not sustain earlier spurts of expansion, while Myanmar and Sri Lanka have faced prolonged crises that, at first glance, resemble patterns more commonly associated with parts of Africa or Latin America. Given this patchwork, it is reasonable to ask how feasible genuinely balanced, reciprocal comparisons are, and whether "the South" is analytically useful for comparative economic history at all.

The conventional reply is that, at least during the second half of the twentieth century, Southern economies shared the problem of "late" development. Operating far from the world technology frontier, they had to import and adapt external knowledge in order to close productivity gaps. From the perspective of state-led development theory, late industrialization therefore requires a state with sufficient capacity to address market failures and chronic underinvestment in public goods such as health, schooling, and infrastructure, often through institutional change. In Gerschenkron's (1962) formulation, the "economics of backwardness" centers on relaxing the very constraints that perpetuate lagging performance. The "developmental state," a concept introduced by Johnson (1982) in relation to Northeast Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan), denotes a state able to coordinate this process. It does so by mobilizing resources and aligning the interests of political leaders, bureaucracies, firms, workers, and financiers around long-horizon strategies, including the distributional trade-offs that such strategies entail. These sacrifices can be politically legitimized through nationalist projects oriented toward resisting Western or Chinese domination (Johnson, 1982; Amsden, 1989; Woo-Cumings, 1999). Earlier development economists in the mid-twentieth century also emphasized large-scale, coordinated reform, arguing for "big push" dynamics and strong state authority capable of overcoming entrenched interests (Rosenstein-Rodan, 1943; Myrdal, 1968; Kuznets, 1973). Gerschenkron (1962) highlighted state roles in mobilizing infrastructure investment and building finance suited to industrialization under rising minimum efficient scales. Johnson (1982), focusing on Japan, emphasized the role of MITI and characterized Japan as a "plan-rational capitalist" state, distinct from Soviet planning in that private ownership persisted under intensive state steering, whereas the Soviet model combined planning with state ownership. From these archetypes, the state-directed development literature broadened to encompass multiple variants, with South Korea often treated as the emblematic success (Amsden, 1989; Kohli, 2004; Freund, 2019).

Yet the need to catch up with frontier economies is not unique to the South. In the North, only a limited set of early industrializers consistently pushed the technology frontier outward; many others advanced primarily as adopters

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

and improvers, borrowing from neighbors. Catch-up pressures driven by economic rivalry and military competition were central in the United States, across Europe, and in Japan, much as they are in contemporary China or Ethiopia. Confronted with British free-trade doctrines and the inundation of continental markets with British manufactures, Friedrich List, associated with the German historical school, argued for state-coordinated industrialization, advocating protective measures and a customs union to support domestic capability building. If the core distinction is not simply invention versus diffusion, then what else differentiates North and South?

A closer reading suggests that the "South," as a historical analytic category, is better understood through a particular combination of constraints that together form a quadruple challenge. First, by the mid-twentieth century, the productivity and technology distance separating many Southern economies from the frontier had reached an unprecedented scale. This likely made the policy problem of late industrialization more complex than it had been for earlier catch-up cases, and it motivates the question of whether, for some countries, the gap has become extraordinarily difficult to close (Austin, 2016).

Second, the widening imbalance in industrial and military power meant that Southern societies faced the threat, and often the reality, of imperial domination. Imperial influence ranged from direct colonial rule and settler projects to foreign control over domestic capital markets and targeted constraints on internal and external policy through coercive diplomacy. Although not exclusively, these pressures were largely exercised by a small group of Western metropoles. Across its different forms, imperialism and lived experiences of constrained sovereignty shaped the political economy in which national identities formed and in which economic policy was expected to support autonomy. Third, the pursuit of prosperity together with political independence, as expressed for example in the nonaligned vision articulated at Bandung in 1955, unfolded in an increasingly globalized system. In such a system, domestic producers were rarely protected by geographic isolation; protection depended on explicit policy choices, many of which were later weakened by the growing influence of Washington Consensus ideas.

Fourth, attempts to narrow productivity gaps occurred, and increasingly occur, as open land and resource frontiers that once attracted imperial capital have closed rapidly (Barbier, 2010). The closure of frontiers also reduced opportunities for labor to move freely, as migration became progressively regulated by states over the twentieth century (McKeown, 2008). There is suggestive evidence that depletion, climate shocks, and ecological degradation weigh more heavily on Southern economies than on Northern ones, but the degree to which climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental stresses will intensify South–South Divergence remains an open research question.

Taken together, exposure to externally generated technologies, the growing disciplining force of world markets, limited room for autonomous state action, and mounting environmental constraints give the global South a measure of coherence as a comparative category. This does not imply that its boundaries are precise. Japan illustrates how a state threatened by external power could forge internal coalitions to prevent intrusion and, in doing so, become an industrial and imperial power itself; a parallel argument can be made for the United States. Nor is it obvious why countries such as Albania or Moldavia should be classified as part of the North. Even allowing for such hybrids, however, there remains a strong case for treating the South as a large, heterogeneous space in which most societies have confronted, in one form or another, this quadruple challenge, making it a plausible basis for systematic comparative research.

Why Is State-Led Development So Hard to Achieve?

If we accept the "quadruple challenge" as a defining backdrop, the next step is to clarify the most basic questions that a South–South Divergence agenda should tackle. Below are three broad, first-order questions meant to open discussion rather than to provide a complete catalogue. Together, they orient inquiry toward the origins, mechanisms,

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

and lived consequences of divergence within the global South. Most post-colonial states at some point adopted strategies to expand, diversify, and modernize their economies with the aim of raising welfare. Yet only a minority achieved sustained success. A central comparative question, then, is how these development programs differed in design and execution, and why state-directed industrialization translated into durable growth in much of North and Southeast Asia while producing weaker or more fragile outcomes across much of Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. Put more sharply: what explains the limited transferability of the East Asian developmental-state experience?

The state-led development literature typically clusters explanations into three interrelated strands. First is the Weberian idea of state capacity: the ability to mobilize resources, secure coercive authority, collect and process information for taxation and policy, and supply credible legal frameworks that protect investment, limit corruption, and address market failures (Tilly, 1990; Besley & Persson, 2009). Without a professional bureaucracy and a dependable legal order, governments struggle to manage persistent conflicts among social groups and to implement long-run development plans. Evans (1995), comparing efforts to build national computer industries in Brazil, India, and South Korea, emphasizes the importance of a technically capable bureaucracy with strong professional norms. His concept of embedded autonomy captures the tension at the heart of industrial policy: to intervene effectively, the state must be sufficiently coherent and insulated from capture by private interests, yet also closely connected to social and economic actors so it can gather information, interpret competing stakes, and calibrate interventions.

A second strand highlights the political economy of state-directed development: how governments assemble coalitions and coordinate resources across social organizations and private networks so that labor, capital, and bureaucratic agencies can commit to long-term strategies (Levi, 1988; Tilly, 2004). This raises classic questions about credible commitment and governance: how do states prevent policy from becoming hostage to factional politics when decision-makers themselves benefit from specific economic arrangements? Why do some governments successfully mediate conflicts between workers and firms, farmers and industrialists, or rival ethnic and religious blocs, while others fragment or spiral into instability?

Kohli (2004), comparing South Korea with India, Brazil, and Nigeria, gives a stark answer: the critical difference was not necessarily information or competence but cohesive coercive power. In his account, major industrial surges often occurred under authoritarian conditions precisely because repression can suppress distributive pressures and force coordination behind developmental priorities. Kohli rejects culturalist explanations that attribute Asian success to exceptional "discipline" or administrative virtue; instead he argues that repression was central to aligning divergent interests in support of late industrialization. Whether sustained planning truly requires repression remains an empirical question, and historical comparison is well suited to evaluate which regulatory configurations delivered long-run growth. Kohli also stresses, in line with Chang (2002), that strategic protection frequently mattered. Yet many post-colonial states lacked real autonomy over trade and monetary policy, which makes the political sequence of decolonization and the constraints of "sovereign" policy-making crucial to explaining divergence.

Third, developmental programs must fit the fiscal, financial, and regulatory architecture through which markets actually function. Policies that ignore local institutional realities can intensify distortions rather than reduce them (Scott, 1988). This concern extends to externally prescribed reforms: structural adjustment packages promoted by international institutions have at times underestimated their social costs and misjudged policy transmission (Stiglitz, 2002). Even where some degree of protection helps infant industries, designing protection that preserves incentives and discipline is a moving target: optimal policy mixes vary across sectors and periods. Despite some engagement, economic historians have contributed less to these debates than evolutionary economists, development economists, and political scientists. This is consequential because influential theories of state capacity and state-led development often carry limitations that historical global-comparative work can correct.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

A recurring weakness in existing frameworks is their tendency to treat colonial legacies as fixed "initial conditions" and to focus heavily on national policy-making, thereby privileging inward-looking accounts of transformation (Pempel, 1999). Yet colonial rule was not static; it evolved over time, reshaped local institutions in uneven ways, and produced new dynamics through the interaction of indigenous and imperial structures. Rather than compressing colonialism into a baseline variable, it is often more accurate to treat it as a co-determinant that altered pathways of long-run change. Consider Besley and Persson's (2009) theory, which links present-day policy space to earlier investments in legal and fiscal capacity, and explains capacity-building through feedback loops between taxation and property-rights protection under the stimulus of external conflict, especially interstate war (Tilly, 1990). For much of the global South, however, fiscal development was less about war among sovereign states than about building colonial administrations that could finance themselves and reduce burdens on metropolitan taxpayers. Legal capacity, similarly, did not simply reflect metropolitan investment choices; it often resulted from the selective incorporation of local legal practices into colonial frameworks imposed from above. Explaining state capacity in post-colonial settings therefore requires attention to bounded sovereignty and the institutional hybrids produced by local–colonial entanglements (Frankema & van Waijenburg, 2021).

A third overarching question concerns how domestic social orders evolve under conditions of late development in an interconnected world economy. North et al.'s (2009) influential distinction between limited access orders (elite-controlled systems restricting market and political entry to manage violence through patronage) and open access orders (competitive politics and broader entry into markets, supported by civil society and meritocratic norms) implies that long-run prosperity eventually requires transitions toward more open, rule-based systems. In their view, limited access orders may struggle to sustain growth after the easy gains from technology adoption fade, because innovation-led growth needs broader openness and political adaptability. Whether liberal democracy is a necessary condition for durable development is a major unresolved issue for South–South Divergence research. But for present purposes, the key point is that the social orders framework often assumes a sovereign polity and, effectively, a relatively self-contained arena of institutional change. Late industrializers, however, operate in a hyper-globalized, post-colonial environment in which external actors, transnational capital, geopolitical alliances, and international organizations can shape domestic coalitions, policy options, and institutional reforms. Transitions from limited to open access rarely occur in isolation; opposing elites and social groups frequently mobilize with external backing or face external constraints. Ignoring these international and transnational dimensions risks losing explanatory power when studying divergence among Southern economies.

Certainly, Asian economies also endured deep and extended downturns before 1960 most visibly in the 1930s and 1940s, when the Great Depression, the destruction of World War II, and in many places renewed violence around decolonization struck in succession. Precisely because Asia experienced these shocks, the later emergence of sustained growth across large parts of the region marks a historically significant turning point. In an increasingly integrated world economy, cycles of boom and bust can resemble tides: some crises wash over many regions at once (as in the Great Depression), while others concentrate in particular parts of the world (as with the "lost decades" of 1973–1995). One structural correlate of recurrent boom–bust trajectories is limited economic diversification. Economies with narrow export baskets are especially exposed to commodity price swings and adverse shifts in the terms of trade. Comparative measures of export diversification repeatedly place many African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern economies near the bottom of the distribution, while several Southeast Asian countries despite starting from similarly resource-heavy export profiles managed to broaden their production and export structures (Deaton, 1999; Hidalgo & Hausmann, 2009; Bértola, 2016). This helps explain why the debt crisis and associated contractions devastated Africa and Latin America, whereas much of Asia was comparatively less engulfed by the storm.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

The harder question is why such structural traits cluster regionally. Here the metaphor of "family resemblances" is instructive. Similarities across "family members" can reflect nature (shared endowments such as agro-ecological conditions, factor ratios, or inherited institutional constraints) and/or nurture (diffusion of norms, routines, and policy repertoires through proximity, learning, competition, and perceived threats). To explain East Asia's "miracle," one can stress presumed intrinsic attributes favorable agrarian conditions, disciplined labor, or strong coercive states or, alternatively, interpret success as an outcome of intra-regional emulation and rivalry, where early exemplars (e.g., Japan or Singapore) catalyzed policy learning and competitive upgrading among neighbors. The same lens can be applied to regional co-movements elsewhere: synchronized "lost decades" across many African economies, or the pronounced oscillations between democracy and authoritarianism in parts of Latin America under conditions of severe inequality (Sokoloff & Engerman, 2000; North et al., 2000). Families also contain exceptions (Mahoney, 2010). Moreover, when trade blocs portray themselves as "families" (EU, ASEAN, Mercosur, ECOWAS), they institutionalize common rules and identities, sanction or pressure deviant members, and sometimes trigger exits or isolation dynamics that can shape development patterns over time.

Notably, economic history has seldom staged an explicit nature–nurture debate for developing regions. A limited literature on Asia examines how Japan and China helped structure an Asian international economic order, drawing on the "flying geese" model (Akamatsu, 1962) in which rising wages in more advanced economies push labor-intensive stages of production toward lower-wage neighbors; cultural, linguistic, and geographic proximity often facilitate these relocation decisions (Sugihara, 2005; Otsuka & Sugihara, 2019; Latham & Kawakatsu, 1994). Extending this approach suggests a broader next step: systematically comparing histories of regional (dis)integration to explain why developmental trajectories cluster.

Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa offer a compelling paired comparison. Both were relatively sparsely populated historically; both specialized heavily in primary commodities (especially tropical cash crops); both were colonized by Western powers that imposed or deepened commodity specializations; both saw large-scale labor migrations under colonial rule; and both passed through violent decolonization. Up to about 1970, both regions exhibited similarly low per capita incomes (notwithstanding possible measurement issues) and widespread poverty. Yet over the last half-century, their paths diverged dramatically more sharply than many observers anticipated in the 1960s. Standard explanations for the post-1970 split highlight Southeast Asia's gains from the Green Revolution versus weaker agricultural productivity growth in sub-Saharan Africa (Hayami et al., 1998; Otsuka et al., 2009). Related accounts stress differences in policy orientation: an "urban bias" in many African political economies compared with more rural-focused strategies in Southeast Asia (Lipton, 1977; Henley, 2012; Berendsen et al., 2013). Comparative work on Indonesia and Nigeria argues that purposeful poverty-reduction measures in the former and their relative absence in the latter account for much of the divergence, without requiring deeper historical roots (Bevan et al., 1999). Henley (2015) similarly re-emphasizes post-colonial policy choices as the main driver.

Yet these arguments raise a deeper puzzle: why did Southeast Asia more often generate regimes capable of coherent long-run strategies sometimes authoritarian but developmentally oriented while many African states were more frequently captured by short-horizon predation? If we reject cultural essentialism, a more historically grounded hypothesis is that divergence may be rooted in regional political–economic structures shaped over the long run: intraregional trade in staples and manufactures (grain, textiles), labor migration circuits, capital flows, and durable business networks. From this perspective, colonial rule mattered not only through what it extracted or imposed, but through how it reconfigured regional connectivity. One line of inquiry is whether colonial policies, together with post-colonial conflict, fragmented exchange networks more severely in sub-Saharan Africa weakening regional integration and raising the likelihood of recurring instability while in Southeast Asia they may have consolidated or redirected networks that later underpinned recovery, learning, and structural transformation. If so, parts of sub-Saharan Africa

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

may still be recovering from and repeatedly pushed back into large-scale instability associated with regional disintegration. These are precisely the kinds of questions that a South–South comparative agenda can investigate with greater precision and explanatory reach.

Can The Whole World Be Developed?

In 1981, Richard Easterlin posed a deceptively simple question in the Journal of Economic History: why has "development" not become universal? The phrasing implies that a world in which everyone attains development is within reach. But whether that is feasible is precisely the deeper issue. Building on the two earlier questions, the third and most basic problem is whether global development is possible at all. If we define "development" as the durable elimination of poverty in all its forms, the question becomes: can the global economy realistically deliver sustained poverty eradication everywhere?

A prominent strand of Great Divergence scholarship suggests that Western "great enrichment" was achieved partly by limiting the growth possibilities of the global South through the ways the "periphery" was incorporated into an expanding world system (Wallerstein, 1974). This broadly zero-sum interpretation of modern growth and inequality typically rests on three claims. First, Britain's industrial takeoff depended on transatlantic feedback loops tied to plantation slavery especially the coerced exploitation of African labor that supplied key commodities (notably cotton and sugar) and helped generate investible surpluses (Williams, 2022 [1944]; Inikori, 2002; Beckert, 2015; Berg & Hudson, 2023). Second, nineteenth- and twentieth-century globalization is argued to have undermined Southern manufacturing, accelerating deindustrialization as primary-commodity specializations were reinforced (Inikori, 2009; Williamson, 2011; Parthasarathi, 2011). This connects both to comparative-advantage reasoning and to structuralist/dependency arguments emphasizing long-run deterioration and volatility in the terms of trade for commodity exporters (Prebisch, 1950; Deaton, 1999; Williamson, 2012). Third, "reversal of fortune" accounts contend that extractive colonial institutions entrenched enduring disadvantages, leaving deep and persistent marks on the global distribution of income (Rodney, 1972; Acemoglu et al., 2001; 2002).

At the same time, the dramatic catch-up of many Asian economies including former colonies complicates strongly deterministic versions of these arguments. It demonstrates that global hierarchies and power arrangements can shift. Yet an open question remains: in a tightly integrated world economy, does the rapid ascent of one region necessarily narrow the space for others? Put in South–South Divergence terms: does Asia's rise expand opportunity for Africa and for middle-income regions in Latin America and the Middle East, or does it crowd them out? Three lines of reasoning help frame the issue.

First, Asia increased its share of global trade by exploiting cost advantages across agriculture, manufacturing, and tradable services and then, in several cases, by moving from labor-intensive segments into more capital- and technology-intensive production while retaining price competitiveness (Austin & Sugihara, 2013). Whether a comparable relocation of production will occur again this time toward Africa remains contested. Some argue that a near-term "next shift" is unlikely because wage differences between Asian newly industrialized economies and the poorest African economies are often too small to compensate for large productivity gaps, especially when living costs (food and urban housing) push wages and prices upward relative to income (van Waijenburg, 2018; Gelb & Diofasi, 2015; Allen, 2017). If cost gaps are modest and productivity gaps are wide, Africa's scope to win mobile manufacturing and services on labor-cost grounds alone may be constrained.

Second, as land and resource frontiers tighten and ecosystems degrade, incentives to chase rents from minerals and energy may intensify. Over the long twentieth century particularly since the 1970s global price trends have often favored mineral exporters relative to many tropical crops. This has encouraged a number of African economies to

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

deepen mineral specialization. While such specialization can raise growth during booms, it can also hinder diversification and amplify volatility through classic "resource curse" mechanisms (Auty, 1993; van der Ploeg, 2011; Williamson, 2012). Meanwhile, narrowing land/resource frontiers and stricter border regimes reduce the historical "safety valve" of large-scale labor migration that earlier industrializers and populous Asian economies once relied upon (O'Rourke & Williamson, 1999; McKeown, 2008). Add the distributional and employment risks posed by climate change especially for agriculture and the feasibility of universal poverty eradication becomes even more uncertain.

Third, the digital revolution has lowered the costs of transmitting knowledge, but it has not produced anything like equal access to the human capital and advanced capabilities needed for sustained structural transformation. Future production is likely to depend on tight complementarities between sophisticated skills and AI-enabled technologies. That raises hard questions about whether the least developed economies can close capability gaps, whether scale is required to do so, and whether tacit monopolies over certain skill–technology bundles will create new and durable barriers to late development (Austin, 2016; Chaudhary et al., 2012).

These concerns also point to a methodological opportunity: diachronic (across-time) South–South comparisons can clarify how the constraints and openings for catch-up have changed across eras yet they remain underused. A notable exception is Bates et al. (2007), who compare nineteenth-century Latin America's post-independence "lost decades" with Africa's late-twentieth-century stagnation, asking whether prolonged instability can give way to a commodity-export-led recovery under certain global conditions. Even if the historical parallels are imperfect (Prados de la Escosura, 2009; Travieso, 2020), such comparisons sharpen the analysis of how crises end, how new political–economic equilibria emerge, and how global context shapes recovery. Extending this logic to Asia is equally promising: many Asian countries suffered severe post-colonial turmoil violence, hyperinflation, famine before later achieving sustained poverty reduction. Systematic comparisons of crisis-and-recovery sequences across the global South could therefore illuminate what it takes for countries to reach stable middle-income trajectories without poverty, and whether the contemporary global order makes that goal easier or harder than in earlier periods.

New Comparative Horizons in Global Economic History

The Great Divergence debate has been one of the most productive intellectual projects in economic history. It energized the field by stimulating the creation of large-scale global datasets, deepening collaboration between scholars working in Western and Asian contexts, drawing new students into lively disagreements, and crucially recasting comparative historical method around the principle of reciprocity.

This review has argued that a South–South Divergence agenda can extend Great Divergence scholarship in a coherent and timely way, because it directs attention to the varied development paths of "late" industrializers and the uneven diffusion of modern economic growth across the global South. Advancing this agenda calls for methodological emphases that are often underweighted in contemporary economics: long-run temporal horizons, transnational perspectives, and diachronic (across-time) comparisons. These approaches are essential complements to the current drive for causal identification via applied microeconomic methods. While such techniques can illuminate specific mechanisms, they are less effective at reconnecting fragmented findings into an integrated historical account. In long-run narratives of divergence and convergence, "endogeneity" is not merely a technical complication it is a defining feature of the processes being explained.

To organize inquiry, three guiding questions were proposed: (1) why the developmental state proved difficult to replicate beyond a subset of East and Southeast Asian cases; (2) why growth and welfare gains cluster across space and time rather than spreading smoothly; and (3) how the economic ascent of one region reshapes the opportunity set available to others seeking similar transformation. Pursuing these questions requires revisiting theories originally

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

designed to explain early industrialization or state formation in sovereign Western settings. Such theories must be reworked to address four conditions that characterize much of the contemporary global South: unprecedented gaps to the technological frontier; bounded and uneven post-colonial autonomy; catch-up strategies pursued within a hyper-globalized world economy; and tightening frontiers above all for natural resources, but also for labor mobility through institutional restrictions. Added to these pressures are mounting uncertainties linked to climate change and biodiversity loss, especially for agrarian development.

The South–South Divergence agenda also offers two pathways to renew economic history as a discipline. It encourages region specialists to move beyond inward-looking debates and place their findings within broader South–South comparative frames fostering new collaborations and underscoring the need for capacity building in economic history across the global South. It also strengthens the field's public relevance: historically grounded perspectives can inform policy and media debates on issues such as renewed debt vulnerability in Africa, the implications of China's growth slowdown, the political economy of regional (dis)integration, and competing visions of green growth and degrowth. Ultimately, the aim is to incorporate the global South into world economic historiography on its own terms, while expanding the comparative horizons needed to sustain economic history as a distinctive craft.

References

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., & Robinson, J. A. (2001). The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *American Economic Review, 91*(5), 1369–1401.

Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., & Robinson, J. A. (2002). Reversal of fortune: Geography and institutions in the making of the modern world income distribution. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 117*(4), 1231–1294.

Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Crown Publishers.

Akamatsu, K. (1962). A historical pattern of economic growth in developing countries. *The Developing Economies, 1*, 3–25.

Allen, R. C. (2009). *The British industrial revolution in global perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

Allen, R. C., Bassino, J.-P., Moll-Murata, C., Ma, D., & van Zanden, J. L. (2011). Wages, prices, and living standards in China, 1738–1925: In comparison with Europe, Japan, and India. *Economic History Review, 64*(S1), 8–38.

Allen, T. (2017). *The cost of high food prices in West Africa* (West African Papers No. 8). OECD Publishing.

Andersson, M., & Axelsson, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Diverse development paths and structural transformation in the escape from poverty*. Oxford University Press.

Amsden, A. H. (1989). *Asia's next giant: South Korea and late industrialization*. Oxford University Press.

Austin, G. (2007). Reciprocal comparison and African history: Tackling conceptual eurocentrism in the study of Africa's economic past. *African Studies Review, 50*(3), 1–28.

Austin, G. (2016). Is Africa too late for "late development"? Gerschenkron south of the Sahara. In M. Andersson & T. Axelsson (Eds.), *Diverse development paths and structural transformation in the escape from poverty*. Oxford University Press.

Austin, G., & Sugihara, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Labour-intensive industrialization in global history*. Routledge.

Auty, R. M. (1993). *Sustaining development in mineral economies: The resource curse thesis*. Taylor & Francis.

Baldwin, R. (2016). *The great convergence: Information technology and the new globalization*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Barbier, E. B. (2010). *Scarcity and frontiers: How economies have developed through natural resource exploitation*. Cambridge University Press.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

Bassino, J.-P., Broadberry, S., Fukao, K., Gupta, B., & Takashima, M. (2019). Japan and the great divergence, 730–1874. *Explorations in Economic History, 72*, 1–22.

Bates, R. H., Coatsworth, J. H., & Williamson, J. G. (2007). Lost decades: Postindependence performance in Latin America and Africa. *The Journal of Economic History, 67*(4), 917–943.

Beckert, S. (2015). *Empire of cotton: A global history*. Vintage Books.

Berendsen, B., Dietz, T., Noordholt, H. S., & van der Veen, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Asian tigers, African lions: Comparing the development performance of Southeast Asia and Africa*. Brill.

Berg, M., & Hudson, P. (2023). *Slavery, capitalism and the industrial revolution*. Polity Press.

Bértola, L. (2016). Has Latin America changed tracks? Catching up now and then: An essay. In M. Andersson & T. Axelsson (Eds.), *Diverse development paths and structural transformation in the escape from poverty* (pp. 158–180). Oxford University Press.

Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2009). The origins of state capacity: Property rights, taxation, and politics. *American Economic Review, 99*(4), 1218–1244.

Bevan, D., Collier, P., & Gunning, J. W. (1999). *The political economy of poverty, equity, and growth: Nigeria and Indonesia*. Oxford University Press.

Wong, R. B. (1997). *China transformed: Historical change and the limits of European experience*. Cornell University Press.

Wong, R. B., & Rosenthal, J.-L. (2011). *Before and beyond divergence: The politics of economic change in China and Europe*. Harvard University Press.

Brandt, W., & Independent Commission on International Development Issues. (1980). *North–South: A programme for survival*. Pan Books.

Broadberry, S., & Gupta, B. (2006). The early modern great divergence: Wages, prices and economic development in Europe and Asia, 1500–1800. *Economic History Review, 59*(1), 2–31.

Broadberry, S., Campbell, B. M. S., Klein, A., Overton, M., & van Leeuwen, B. (2015). *British economic growth, 1270–1870*. Cambridge University Press.

Broadberry, S., & Gardner, L. (2016). Economic development in Africa and Europe: Reciprocal comparisons. *Revista de Historia Económica / Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History, 34*(1), 11–37.

Broadberry, S., & Wallis, J. J. (2017). *Growing, shrinking and long run economic performance: Historical perspectives on economic development* (CEPR Working Paper No. 11973). Centre for Economic Policy Research.

Chang, H.-J. (1999). The economic theory of the developmental state. In M. Woo-Cumings (Ed.), *The developmental state* (pp. 182–199). Cornell University Press.

Chang, H.-J. (2002). *Kicking away the ladder: Development strategy in historical perspective*. Anthem Press.

Chaudhary, L., Musacchio, A., Nafziger, S., & Yan, S. (2012). Big BRICs, weak foundations: The beginning of public elementary education in Brazil, Russia, India, and China. *Explorations in Economic History, 49*(2), 221–240.

Deaton, A. (1999). Commodity prices and growth in Africa. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 13*(3), 23–40.

Deng, K., & O'Brien, P. (2017). Why Maddison was wrong. *World Economics, 18*(2), 21–42.

De Pleijt, A., & van Zanden, J. L. (2016). Accounting for the little divergence: What drove economic growth in pre-industrial Europe, 1300–1800? *European Review of Economic History, 20*(4), 387–409.

de Vries, J., & van der Woude, A. (1997). *The first modern economy: Success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy, 1500–1815*. Cambridge University Press.

de Zwart, P., & Lucassen, J. (2020). Poverty or prosperity in Northern India? New evidence of real wages, 1590–1870s. *Economic History Review, 73*(3), 644–667.

Diamond, J. (1997). *Guns, germs and steel: The fates of human societies*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Easterlin, R. A. (1981). Why isn't the whole world developed? *The Journal of Economic History, 41*(1), 1–19.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

Ehrlich, P. R. (1968). *The population bomb*. Ballantine Books.

Eichengreen, B. (2007). *The European economy since 1945: Coordinated capitalism and beyond*. Princeton University Press.

Elliott, J. H. (2006). *Empires of the Atlantic world: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830*. Yale University Press.

Evans, P. (1995). *Embedded autonomy: States and industrial transformation*. Princeton University Press.

Francks, P. (2016). *Japan and the great divergence: A short guide*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Frank, A. G. (1998). *ReOrient: Global economy in the Asian age*. University of California Press.

Frankema, E., & Booth, A. (Eds.). (2020). *Fiscal capacity and the colonial state in Asia and Africa, c. 1850–1960*. Cambridge University Press.

Frankema, E., & van Waijenburg, M. (2018). Africa rising? A historical perspective. *African Affairs, 117*(469), 543–568.

Frankema, E., & van Waijenburg, M. (2021). Fiscal development under colonial and sovereign rule. In P. Genschel & L. Seelkopf (Eds.), *Global taxation: How modern taxes conquered the world* (pp. 67–98). Oxford University Press.

Freund, B. (2019). *Twentieth-century South Africa: A developmental history*. Cambridge University Press.

Fukuyama, F. (Ed.). (2008). *Falling behind: Explaining the development gap between Latin America and the United States*. Oxford University Press.

Galor, O. (2022). *The journey of humanity: The origins of wealth and inequality*. The Bodley Head.

Geertz, C. (1963). *Agricultural involution: The process of ecological change in Indonesia*. University of California Press.

Gelb, A., & Diofasi, A. (2015). *What determines purchasing-power parity exchange rates?* (Working Paper 416). Center for Global Development.

Gerschenkron, A. (1962). *Economic backwardness in historical perspective: A book of essays*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Goldstone, J. (2021). Dating the great divergence. *Journal of Global History, 16*(2), 266–285.

Grilli, E., & Yang, M. C. (1988). Primary commodity prices, manufactured goods prices, and the terms of trade of developing countries: What the long run shows. *The World Bank Economic Review, 2*(1), 1–47.

Hatcher, J., & Stephenson, J. (2018). *Seven centuries of unreal wages: The unreliable data, sources and methods that have been used for measuring standards of living in the past*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hayami, Y., Platteau, J.-P., & Dasgupta, P. (1998). Resource endowments and agricultural development: Africa versus Asia. In Y. Hayami & M. Aoki (Eds.), *The institutional foundations of East Asian economic development: Proceedings of the IEA conference held in Tokyo, Japan* (pp. 357–412). St. Martin's Press (in association with the International Economic Association).

He, W. (2013). *Paths toward the modern fiscal state: England, Japan, and China*. Harvard University Press.

Henley, D. (2012). The agrarian roots of industrial growth: Rural development in South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. *Development Policy Review, 30*(1), S25–S47.

Henley, D. (2015). *Asia–Africa development divergence: A question of intent*. Zed Books.

Henrich, J. (2020). *The WEIRDest people in the world: How the West became psychologically peculiar and particularly prosperous*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Hidalgo, C., & Hausmann, R. (2009, September). *The building blocks of economic complexity* (Working Paper No. 186). Center for International Development.

Hoffman, P. T. (2015). *Why did Europe conquer the world?* Princeton University Press.

Inikori, J. E. (2002). *Africans and the industrial revolution in England: A study in international trade and economic development*. Cambridge University Press.

Inikori, J. E. (2009). English versus Indian cotton textiles: The impact of imports on cotton textile production in West Africa. In G. Riello & T. Roy (Eds.), *How India clothed the world: The world of South Asian textiles, 1500–1850* (pp. 85–114). Brill.

Johnson, C. (1982). *MITI and the Japanese miracle: The growth of industrial policy, 1925–1975*. Stanford University Press.

Johnson, P., & Papageorgiou, C. (2020). What remains of cross-country convergence? *Journal of Economic Literature, 58*(1), 129–175.

Jones, E. L. (1981). *The European miracle: Environments, economies, and geopolitics in the history of Europe and Asia*. Cambridge University Press.

Kohli, A. (2004). *State-directed development: Political power and industrialization in the global periphery*. Cambridge University Press.

Kuran, T. (2011). *The long divergence: How Islamic law held back the Middle East*. Princeton University Press.

Kuznets, S. (1973). Modern economic growth: Findings and reflections. *American Economic Review, 63*(3), 247–258.

Landes, D. S. (1998). *The wealth and poverty of nations: Why are some so rich and others so poor?* W. W. Norton.

Latham, J., & Kawakatsu, H. (Eds.). (1994). *Japanese industrialization and the Asian economy*. Routledge.

Lees, N. (2021). The Brandt Line after forty years: The more north–south relations change, the more they stay the same? *Review of International Studies, 47*(1), 85–106.

Levi, M. (1988). *Of rule and revenue*. University of California Press.

Li, B., & van Zanden, J. L. (2012). Before the great divergence? Comparing the Yangzi Delta and the Netherlands at the beginning of the nineteenth century. *The Journal of Economic History, 72*(4), 956–989.

Lieberman, V. (2010). *Strange parallels: Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800–1830* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.

Lipton, M. (1977). *Why poor people stay poor: A study of urban bias in world development*. Temple Smith.

Ma, D., & van Zanden, J. L. (2017). What makes Maddison right. *World Economics, 18*(3), 203–213.

Maddison, A. (2003). *The world economy: Historical statistics*. OECD Development Centre.

Maddison Project Database. (2020). *Maddison Project Database 2020*. https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2020

Mahoney, J. (2010). *Colonialism and postcolonial development: Spanish America in comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

McCloskey, D. N. (1998). Bourgeois virtue and the history of P and S. *The Journal of Economic History, 58*(2), 297–317.

McKeown, A. (2008). *Melancholy order: Asian migration and the globalization of borders*. Columbia University Press.

Milanovic, B. (2016). *Global inequality: A new approach for the age of globalization*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Mokyr, J. (2009). *The enlightened economy: Britain and the industrial revolution, 1700–1850*. Penguin Books.

Mokyr, J. (2018). *A culture of growth: The origins of the modern economy*. Princeton University Press.

Morris, I. (2010). *Why the West rules—for now: The patterns of history, and what they reveal about the future*. Profile Books.

Myrdal, G. (1968). *Asian drama: An inquiry into the poverty of nations*. Pantheon Books.

North, D. C., Summerhill, W., & Weingast, B. R. (2000). Order, disorder, and economic change. In B. Bueno de Mesquita & H. L. Root (Eds.), *Governing for prosperity* (pp. 17–58). Yale University Press.

North, D. C., & Thomas, R. P. (1973). *The rise of the Western world: A new economic history*. Cambridge University Press.

North, D. C., Wallis, J. J., & Weingast, B. R. (2009). *Violence and social orders: A conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*. Cambridge University Press.

Nunn, N. (2008). The long-term effects of Africa's slave trades. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 123*(1), 139–176.

O'Brien, P. (2006). Historiographical traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history. *Journal of Global History, 1*(1), 3–39.

O'Brien, P. K. (2020). *The economies of imperial China and Western Europe: Debating the great divergence*. Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Rourke, K. H., & Williamson, J. G. (1999). *Globalization and history: The evolution of a nineteenth-century Atlantic economy*. MIT Press.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

O'Rourke, K. H., & Williamson, J. G. (2017). *The spread of modern industry to the periphery since 1871*. Oxford University Press.

Otsuka, K., Estudillo, J. P., & Sawada, Y. (Eds.). (2009). *Rural poverty and income dynamics in Asia and Africa*. Routledge.

Otsuka, K., & Sugihara, K. (2019). *Paths to the emerging state in Asia and Africa*. SpringerOpen.

Pagel, H., Ranke, K., Hempel, F., & Köhler, J. (2014, July 11). *The use of the concept "Global South" in social science & humanities* [Poster presentation]. Symposium "Globaler Süden/Global South: Kritische Perspektiven", Institut für Asien- & Afrikawissenschaften, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Paice, E. (2021). *Youthquake: Why African demography should matter to the world*. Apollo Books.

Parthasarathi, P. (2011). *Why Europe grew rich and Asia did not: Global economic divergence, 1600–1850*. Cambridge University Press.

Pempel, T. J. (1999). The developmental regime in a changing world economy. In M. Woo-Cumings (Ed.), *The developmental state* (pp. 137–181). Cornell University Press.

Pomeranz, K. (2000). *The great divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy*. Princeton University Press.

Prados de la Escosura, L. (2009). Lost decades? Economic performance in post-independence Latin America. *Journal of Latin American Studies, 41*(2), 279–307.

Prebisch, R. (1950). *The economic development of Latin America and its principal problems*. United Nations.

Reid, A. (1993). *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce, 1450–1680: Expansion and crisis* (Vol. 2). Yale University Press.

Riello, G., & Roy, T. (2019). *Global economic history*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

Rosenstein-Rodan, P. N. (1943). Problems of industrialisation of eastern and south-eastern Europe. *The Economic Journal, 53*(210/211), 202–211.

Roy, T. (2012). *India in the world economy: From antiquity to the present*. Cambridge University Press.

Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.

Sokoloff, K. L., & Engerman, S. L. (2000). History lessons: Institutions, factor endowments, and paths of development in the New World. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 14*(3), 217–232.

Sng, T.-H., & Moriguchi, C. (2014). Asia's little divergence: State capacity in China and Japan before 1850. *Journal of Economic Growth, 19*(4), 439–470.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and its discontents*. W. W. Norton.

Sugihara, K. (2005). *Japan, China, and the growth of the Asian international economy, 1850–1949*. Oxford University Press.

Studer, R. (2008). India and the great divergence: Assessing the efficiency of grain markets in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India. *The Journal of Economic History, 68*(2), 393–437.

Tilly, C. (1990). *Coercion, capital, and European states, A.D. 990–1992*. Blackwell.

Tilly, C. (2004). Trust and rule. *Theory and Society, 33*(1), 1–30.

Travieso, E. (2020). *Resources, environment, and rural development in Uruguay, 1779–1913* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge).

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2022). *World population prospects 2022: Summary of results* (UN DESA/POP/2022/TR/NO. 3). https://population.un.org/wpp/

van der Ploeg, F. (2011). Natural resources: Curse or blessing? *Journal of Economic Literature, 49*(2), 366–420.

van Zanden, J. L. (2009). *The long road to the industrial revolution: The European economy in a global perspective, 1000–1800*. Brill.

van Zanden, J. L., Baten, J., Mira d'Ercole, M., Rijpma, A., Smith, C., & Timmer, M. (Eds.). (2014). *How was life? Global well-being since 1820*. OECD Publishing.

P-ISSN: 2520-6338 | E-ISSN: 2617-4006

Vries, P. H. H. (2010). The California school and beyond: How to study the great divergence? *History Compass, 8*(7), 730–751.

Vries, P. H. H. (2015). *State, economy and the great divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Vries, P. H. H. (2020). *Averting a great divergence: State and economy in Japan, 1868–1937*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system*. Academic Press.

Williams, E. (2022). *Capitalism and slavery* (Penguin Classics ed.). Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1944)

Williamson, J. G. (2011). *Trade and poverty when the Third World fell behind*. MIT Press.

Williamson, J. G. (2012). Commodity prices over two centuries: Trends, volatility, and impact. *Annual Review of Resource Economics, 4*, 185–206.

Wittfogel, K. A. (1957). *Oriental despotism: A comparative study of total power*. Yale University Press.

Woo-Cumings, M. (Ed.). (1999). *The developmental state*. Cornell University Press.

World Bank. (1993). *The East Asian miracle: Economic growth and public policy*. World Bank.

World Bank. (2020). *World development indicators 2020*. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators

World Bank. (2022). *Commodity markets: Commodity price data (The Pink Sheet)*. https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/commodity-markets