

The world we are living in history essay

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-----The rise of EuropePart OneThe world we are living in was shaped by the rapid economic growth that took place in the nineteenth century. Being one of the two principal themes, development has become more and more important. Most economists are curious about why the historically unprecedented period of sustained growth took in Western Europe and why it started in the sixteenth century. There have always been disagreements on how did Western Europe rise indeed. We are talking about this topic, not just for fun. Indeed, it has some realistic significance. Knowing why and how the Western Europe developed, we can guide the general developing countries how to develop and help to eliminate poverty and improve the whole standard of living all around the world. This paper establishes the patterns of economic growth in Western Europe during this era, develops a hypothesis on the origins of the rise of (Western) Europe and provides historical and econometric evidence supporting some of the implications of this hypothesis. In a word, this paper plays an important role in studying this topic. Part TwoTheir hypothesis is that Atlantic trade—the opening of the sea routes to the New World, Africa, and Asia and the building of colonial empires—contributed to the process of West European growth between 1500 and 1850, not only through direct economic effects, but also indirectly by inducing fundamental institutional change. The trade altered the balance of political power by enriching and strengthening commercial interests outside the royal circle, including various overseas merchants, slave traders, and various colonial planters. Their hypothesis also implies that the tendency for institutional change to emerge should have been much stronger in societies with existing checks on royal power than in countries with absolutist regimes and monarchy-controlled trade monopolies. The authors document the

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different growth rate of different countries(whether it has a convenient access to The Atlantic Ocean)and different times(from sixteenth century to nineteenth century). To make a conclusion, the authors believe that there must be a close link between the Atlantic trade and the First Great Divergence. And from the graphs given by the authors, we can easily find that the rise of Europe is actually the rise of Atlantic Traders. However, we can also find that not all the Atlantic Traders have the same pattern of development growth. So, the authors have another hypothesis, there should have been some relations between the economic growths and the institution changes. In fact, when we have a close look at the statistics, we can see that the more rapid economic growth took place in societies with relatively nonabsolutist initial institutions. When it comes to the principal of economic growth, we also use the concept of urbanization. It is really fun to find that the volume of Atlantic trade was much larger than the long-distance Mediterranean trade. The authors try to explain their hypothesis from three parts by precise statistics: Firstly, they construct estimates of urbanization based on the urban population numbers. Secondly, they use estimates of GDP per capita. Thirdly, they use European city-level data. These data shows that differential growth of Western Europe from 1600 is closely linked to the extension of Atlantic traders. Furthermore, Many social scientists view war-making as an important factor in the process of state building and subsequent economic development. Wars also have a direct effect of providing proxy for interstate competition. To the better understanding of the readers, they give a list of average number of years at war during the previous period. The profits got from the trade introduced more secure property rights and paved the way for further innovations in economic

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institutions. However, the authors can't make a conclusion for why some successful Atlantic traders didn't industrialize early. But they have raised some purposes, some factors maybe, such as interstate competition, "defensive modernization", responses of certain European nations, and, possibly, the adverse effects of oligarchies on industrialization. Part Three As far as I am concerned, I do agree with the opinions of the authors. The authors mainly stress on the importance of economics and politics. In consistence with their arguments, I want to say something about them, though the writers have explained themselves in detail. In a word to summarise my opinion, I think the First Great Divergence could only start in the sixteenth century and can only occur in the areas around the Atlantic Ocean initially. First, we need to say something about history, which seems to have nothing to do with the great change. All began from culture. For the publicity of Catholicism and with the development of navigation technology, Portugal and Spain encouraged the exploration of the unknown world. And with the efforts of generations of navigators, people gradually found the whole world. At the same time of exploration, the European began to develop trade overseas. Finding the route via the sea, the European didn't need to suffer from block of The austro-hungarian empire. At that time, the whole world need the Agricultural products produced by China and India. Affected by the The Renaissance, Britain abolished the system of absolute monarchy in 1688. And this incident can be seen as the start of modern times. With two hundred years of slave trade and cononial expansion, the Eurpopeans had collect great wealth. With the graat wealth, the rich, or in other words, the capitalist class wanted more power in politics. It's hard to explain the people's need of power, maybe this is what humman nature is.

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The rise of Europe can also mean the rise of the capitalist. The rich class use their power in economics to make the political institution change. In some way, I consider it as a deal, where the capitalists pay money for power. And when the rich got power, they will try to establish and launch some laws, which will protect their rights in the long run. The development in economics resulted in the changes in politics. In return, the changes in politics then promote the growth of economics. This is like a circle. Then, let's talk about why the start of the First Great Divergence can only start in the sixteenth century. Just like what we have said, politics is largely associated with economics. Not until the sixteenth century, did the capitalists have the economic strength to resist from the pressure of the feudal forces and the mature navigation technology for the Great Geographical Discoveries. Next, why did the rapid growth rate occur in Europe? I believe it is the differences between political institution that can explain the question. We all know that, at that time, the capitalists in the Europe were trying to make a big change in political institutions (either by revolution or reform. In a big contrast, most Asian countries, like China, the strongest country in the world at that time, were in a system of absolute monarchy. The capitalists encouraged trade freely while feudal forces banned. What we all know today is market is the most efficient way to allocate resources at the most times. And that is the reason why there is a big difference between growth rates. What I want to add are the effects of culture and violence. What we can not ignore is the cultural differences between the west and east. Chinese traditional culture, the representative of the eastern cultures, directs Chinese people to obey. As a result, Chinese people are always used to suffering, not struggling. And that is why the French Revolution can never happen in China. To make a

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comparison, we take a look at the western culture. Actually western culture is mainly Christian culture. Christian culture encourages the spirit of freedom, democracy and fraternity. If we go on studying, we can draw this conclusion: our Chinese culture is based on the Agricultural Economics, and the Christian culture is based on the Commercial Economics. Last but not least, we can't underestimate the function of violence. Violence here can be defined as war, slave trade, colonial expansion and ect. For example, from the late 15th century to about 1600 and 100, Portuguese colonists took 276000 kg gold and about 1 million kilograms gold from Africa. What about Spain? During the late 16th century, 83% of the world's precious metal mines owned by Spain. Primitive accumulation of capital is necessary, and is the base of the further development of capitalism, though this period is accompanied by the blood and tears of the blacks and the colonies. Of course, if you are careful enough, you may have such a question: not all the Atlantic traders of the western Europe countries. Even they have the same political institution, they may have different growing rate. So, how to explain? May be luck. Who knows? Finally, to make a conclusion, I think the rise of Europe is largely related with Atlantic trade, institution change, culture, violence and luck.