

17.588f13 Week 3 “The Role of Culture in Democracy and Economic Growth”

Questions for Class Discussion

What do we mean by culture? Political culture? What does it mean for culture to cause political or economic outcomes?

Consider Nisbett and Cohen’s argument about the North versus the South (as summarized by Boyd and Richerson). Do you believe their argument?

What is the relationship of the cross-national differences Henrich et al. and Guiso et al. identify to politics?

How can political culture be measured?

Would it matter for Fish’s explanation if data at the individual level (a la Inglehart) revealed no differences in support for democracy between Muslims and non-Muslims who lived in the same country?

In the post-World War II era, East Asian nations performed much better than Latin American nations. Some people have credited Asian values (or blamed Latin ones) for this difference. Are they right?

Berman and Tocqueville would seem to disagree on the benefits of civic organizations. Who is right?

Assume for the moment that a robust civic life is indeed desirable. What can be done to nurture it?

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