

Student Activities

A. Discussion Questions:

What are the determinants of economic development?

What factors most effect economic development?

Resources: Are natural resources fundamental to the development of these economies? How were East Asian countries able to develop considering their relative lack of natural resources? If natural resources include human capital, e.g. educated workers, do you consider East Asian economies resource rich?

Education: To nurture human capital, the government needs to educate the people. Almost all scholars agree on this issue. However, some East Asian governments put special emphasis on certain types of vocational education and special undergraduate and graduate schools focused on technology and engineering. Do you think these education programs helped their economic development? Also, there is a remarkable difference between East Asia and Latin America in terms of the quality of K-12 education. What are the key differences? How does the rate of literacy in a country effect its economic development? Why is K-12 education so important relative to higher education? Is basic education related to income distribution? Is it related to the quality of products produced by a given economy?

Development Strategy: What kind of role do you think government should play in economic development? Do you agree with neoliberal economists who would limit the role of government in order to promote the growth of a market economy? Or do you agree with the development state argument that emphasizes the role of government in selecting, nurturing, and encouraging particular industries? Are you convinced that some governments have displayed an ability to predict which industries will grow? Or do you think it was mere coincidence that East Asian governments seem to have chosen the “right” industries? Another relevant issue here is export. Do you think East Asia’s economic success is related to its focus on export? Was it a strategic choice for East Asian governments or did they have to focus on exports given their relatively small domestic markets? What kind of benefits have exports had? Does the focus on exports help improve the quality of products in foreign markets? How about the relationship between government intervention and export? Do export results provide a dependable gauge by which governments can judge economic performance?

Culture: Can the superior performance of East Asian economies to those of Latin America be solely attributed to the cultural differences? Do you think Confucianism and/or Buddhism are better suited to economic development than Christianity and Catholicism, which are predominant in Latin America? If so, why did it take East Asian economies centuries to become economic powers in the world?

International Environment: Would rapid economic development have been possible in East Asia without security and development assistance from the United States? Would East Asian governments have been so serious about economic development without the fear of

Communism? Alternatively, in spite of the lack of damage caused by World War II, why did Latin American economies fail to continue develop at high rates? Why did the United States funnel its economic support to East Asia rather than Latin America?

Society and Government: What kind of social legacy affected economic development in East Asia and Latin America? Do you think the colonial legacy in Latin America hindered the long-term economic development in the region? In spite of devastating losses of life and property, do you think World War II contributed to post-war economic development in East Asia? How do you explain the relatively egalitarian income distribution in East Asia even under dictatorial regimes? Almost all countries in East Asia and Latin America achieved high-economic growth under authoritarian governments. Do you think it is necessary to have an authoritarian government to achieve rapid economic growth? Why or why not? If yes, why haven't all dictatorships produced economic expansion?

B. Case Study Assignment

Students are expected to conduct a case study of a particular industry to understand the differences between East Asian and Latin American economies. Some of the possible cases are listed above in Student Readings, Section D.