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Class Summary

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Foreword

Chapter One

Introduction to Eurocentrism

Eurocentrism is a cultural phenomenon and worldview that interprets the histories, cultures, and societies of the world primarily from a European or Western European perspective.

Types of Eurocentrism

Historical–Contextual Eurocentrism

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The Historical–Contextual Eurocentrism focuses on the historical context of European dominance, its development, and how historical narratives have been shaped to favor European achievements and perspectives. It often emphasises the unique development of European societies, particularly in terms of rationality and progress.

- Marxist Rationality Argument belongs to his school of Eurocentrism.
- Superiority and emphasis of Greco–Roman dominance and inheritance is also part of this arguement.
    - I.e., Rome is the only great empire and all else must be compared to Rome.

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Ideological Eurocentrism

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Unique and superior ideology justify European superiority and the imposition of European norms and values on other cultures. It includes the belief that European culture is the pinnacle of human development and that other cultures should aspire to European standards.

- Some predecessors of this includes Abrahamic Religion's belief in determinism.
    - These ideas would back up "White Man's Burden" argument in both the history of religious expansion, missionaries, and conquest.

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Residual Eurocentrism

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This refers to the lingering effects of Eurocentric views that persist even in contemporary thought and practices. It can manifest in subtle ways, influencing policies and attitudes even when there is a conscious effort to move beyond Eurocentric frameworks.

- Holding European standards as universalist views and perspectives.
- Example: Mainstream theories in international relations often reflect Eurocentric assumptions about state behavior, sovereignty, and international norms, which may not be applicable or relevant to non–European contexts. This can limit the field's ability to account for diverse geopolitical realities.

- Tolay, J., 2021. Inadvertent reproduction of Eurocentrism in IR: The politics of critiquing Eurocentrism. Review of International Studies, 47, pp. 692 - 713.

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Philosophical Eurocentrism

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Chapter Two

Great Divergence

The "Great Divergence" refers to the widening gap in economic prosperity, technology, and living standards that emerged between the Western world and much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America from the late 18th century onwards—a process deeply linked to colonialism, industrialization, evolving models of economic growth, and the long shadows they cast on global inequality. This chapter examines the foundational growth models (Malthusian, Smithian, Solow, endogenous growth), the mechanics and regional cases of industrialization, the historical roots and institutional legacies of colonialism, wage and consumption dynamics, technology and sustainable development, the racial and ideological foundations of imperialism, the construction of colonial education systems, and contemporary globalization's entanglement with persistent inequality. Where appropriate, tables compare economic models, wage and consumption data, and summarize colonial impacts

The Malthusian Model—Dynamics and Equilibrium

Core Dynamics of the Malthusian Regime

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The Malthusian model, named after Thomas Robert Malthus's 1798 work, is foundational to understanding pre-industrial economic stagnation. It centers on a simple but powerful equilibrium mechanism: **any increase in living standards (real income per capita)**, whether due to fortuitous events or incremental technological progress, leads to population growth. As population expands, diminishing returns in agricultural productivity drive real incomes back to subsistence. Thus, living standards remain stagnant over time, oscillating around a low equilibrium.

The classical formulation can be summarized as follows:

- **Positive relationship:** higher income per person raises birth rates and lowers mortality, spurring population growth.
- **Negative relationship:** rising population depresses per capita income (due to fixed land and slow technological change), which, in turn, checks further population increases via higher mortality.

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Equilibrium Conditions and Adjustments

The interaction between population and income creates a stable long-term equilibrium at **subsistence wage** (the minimum to keep population stable). If population rises (perhaps due to a favorable harvest or a drop in deaths), wages fall and mortality rises until numbers return to equilibrium. Conversely, plagues or famine reduce the population, driving up wages for survivors until birth rates rebound.

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Empirical Evidence: Wages, Life Expectancy, and Mortality

Available wage and demographic data corroborate Malthus's predictions. Before 1800, **real wages were flat or declining** despite occasional technological advances, and **life expectancy remained low** (20–40 years, with high infant and child mortality)6.

Parameter	Pre-1750 Levels	Notes
Technological Innovation	Low	Innovations sporadic, poorly diffused
Productivity	Low	Predominantly subsistence farming
Population Growth	Very slow	Zero or near-zero net growth over centuries
Mortality	High	LE 20–40; high infant/child mortality
Fertility	Moderate	Avg. 4–9 children per woman, but survival to adulthood low
Standard of Living	Subsistence	Vulnerable to shocks, poor nutrition/ housing

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While these trends held globally before the Industrial Revolution, regional heterogeneity did exist: certain parts of China, India, and the Islamic world experienced temporary clusters of higher productivity and urbanization, but these gains rarely broke the Malthusian ceiling for long.

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Critiques and Limits

Modern critics highlight that **declining birthrates, rising food production, and sustained gains in income** from the 19th century onward made Malthus's model obsolete for the industrial world. The demographic transition reversed the link between prosperity and fertility, making Malthus's model mainly a model of the distant past or economies facing environmental constraint

Smithian Growth—Division of Labour and Markets

Smith's Model of Economic Progress

Adam Smith's growth model, articulated in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), stressed the transformative power of the **division of labour, the extent of the market, and capital accumulation**. Unlike Malthus, Smith believed that productivity could rise with scale, specialization, and institutional development:

- **Division of labour**: Specialization increases productivity (e.g., pin factory example), but is limited by the "extent of the market."
- **Market expansion**: Larger and more connected markets allow for further specialization and innovation.
- **Capital accumulation**: Savings and investment increase the stock of productive assets, fueling future growth

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Mechanisms and Limitations

Smith's model embodies a positive feedback loop:

1. More capital → more output
2. Higher output/income → larger market

3. Expanded market → more specialization and innovation
4. Specialization feeds both productivity and the development of new machinery

However, Smith's model also recognizes that **institutional structures and market access are crucial**—state policies, political stability, and secure property rights foster the accumulation and deployment of capital.

Smithian Model Elements	Description
Production function	Output = f(Labor, Land, Capital)
Returns to scale	Increasing, due to division of labour
Growth drivers	Division of labour, market extent, capital accumulation
Population dynamics	Responsive to wages; lower than in Malthus's model
Institutional context	Property rights, legal security, easy commerce

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Empirical Patterns: Britain 1500–1800

Smithian dynamics explain early modern growth spurts seen, for example, in Britain:

- Between 1500–1800, division of labour (documented via occupational data and the spread of urban trades) and increased market integration prefigured Britain's later industrial leap.
- Regions with higher market access, urbanization, and trade saw more specialization, higher wages, and greater productivity.

Metric	Trend, England 1500-1800	Source

# Clockmaking job titles	1 → >25	Smithian study
Urban population	Grew substantially	Chilosi et al.
GDP per capita	Steady rise (esp. after 1650)	Maddison data
Market potential	Strongly correlated w/ specialization	LSE WP382

#

Smithian growth is thus transitional: It paved the way for the Industrial Revolution but did not—and could not—generate the exponential income gains observed post-1800 without further, innovation-driven dynamics.

From Malthus to Solow—Technological Change in Growth Models

Comparing Solow and Malthusian Regimes

The 20th-century Solow model addresses the limitations of both Malthus and Smith by centering **sustained technological progress** and relaxing land constraints:

- **Solow Model:** Growth depends on capital accumulation, labor expansion, and, crucially, **exogenous technological progress**.
- Unlike Malthus, in the Solow framework, **continuous technology adoption raises both income and population sustainably**, allowing for perpetual increases in per capita income if the rate of tech progress exceeds population growth15.

Characteristic	Malthus Model	Solow Model
Main constraint	Land/resources	Diminishing returns to cap.
Tech progress	Slow/exogenous	Exogenous, central driver

		Rising (via tech progress)
Steady-state income	Fixed (subsistence)	

#

Transition from Malthusian to Modern Growth

Modern growth began when societies **escaped the Malthusian trap:** industrialization, institutional reform, and faster technological change enabled sustained per capita income growth for the first time in history.

In Britain, for instance, the transition is evident in:

- **Flat real wages** from the Middle Ages to ~1800; surging after.
- **Population surges** initially lowered wages (Malthusian effect), but subsequent technological progress then increased both wages and population—a signature of the Solow regime.
- **Land's economic significance** plummeted; capital and knowledge took center stage.

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Endogenous Growth—Innovation and Knowledge Spillovers

The Romer Model and Endogenous Innovation

Endogenous growth theory, particularly Paul Romer's model (1990), **internalizes technological progress** by focusing on human capital, R&D, and knowledge spillovers:

- **Ideas are non-rival:** One person's use of an idea does not preclude another's. Thus, research and innovation produce increasing returns at the aggregate level.

- **Positive externalities:** Firms/factories benefit from each other's innovations (knowledge spillovers), creating social returns greater than private ones

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Key Features

• • Sustained growth is achievable with ongoing R&D and knowledge accumulation.

- Human capital and education systems become essential—where skills and research capacity are lacking, regions fall behind in technological adoption and income growth.
- Policy and market structures (e.g., intellectual property law, research grants) play a central role.

Feature	Solow Model	Endogenous/Romer Model
Source of TFP growth	Exogenous	Endogenous (R&D, spillovers)
Role of education	Minor	Central (human capital)
Innovation spillover	Absent	Key externality

#

Empirical Evidence

• • Countries with higher investments in R&D and education show higher long-run growth rates.

- Global productivity gaps (e.g., US vs. Sub-Saharan Africa) correlate strongly with research/education disparities and the ability to absorb, adapt, and generate new technologies

The Industrial Revolution—Regional Case Studies of Growth

Patterns and Drivers of Industrialization

The Industrial Revolution, starting roughly in late-18th-century Britain, is the locus classicus of the Great Divergence:

- **Britain** led with mechanized textile production, steam power, and coal-based energy. Urbanization accelerated as employment shifted from farming to industry. By 1850, real incomes and productivity diverged sharply from Asian and African economies7.
- **Continental Europe** (France, Germany, Belgium) followed in the 19th century, though with varied speeds and state involvement.

Country	GDP/capita 1820	GDP/capita 1870	Industrialisation (share)
UK	$1706	$3,190	>30% by 1870
NL	$1,838	$2,757	>25% by 1870
India	$533	$533	<10% in 19th C.
China	$600	$530	Stagnant/declining
Japan	$669	$737	Industrial takeoff post-1868

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Regional Lag: India and China, which had been on par with Europe in the early modern period, saw stagnation or outright deindustrialization under colonial or semi-colonial constraints

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Deindustrialization and the East

- **India: The British colonial regime promoted the export of raw materials, undermined local textiles with tariff and policy barriers, and imported British manufactures, precipitating "de-proto-industrialization" in key regions.**

- **China**: Long led the world in production and urbanization but lost competitive ground by c. 1800 as its institutions failed to match the pace of Western innovation and trade expansion.

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Global Wage and GDP Gaps

Growing wage, GDP, and consumption gaps after 1800 permanently altered the relative fortunes of societies—a trend that still drives global inequality today

The Historical Context of the Great Divergence

Timing, Contours, and Explanatory Theories

The Great Divergence is widely accepted as having unfolded between 1750 and 1900, reshaping the world. Key facts:

- In **1500**, differences in standards of living were modest (factor of 4); today, the ratio between richest and poorest nations exceeds 40:1.
- **Core drivers:**
  - The Industrial Revolution (Western Europe, North America)
  - Colonial expansion and resource transfer (from colonies to metropole)

- Institutional change (property rights, inclusive vs. extractive institutions)
- Technology adoption and innovation

Explanatory Variable	Key Role
Geography	Coastline, coal, agricultural productivity
Institutions	Inclusive (secure property rights) vs. extractive
Colonial legacies	Structures persisting post-independence
Human capital	Education, research capacity, "absorptive ability"
State and policy	Investment, openness, trade policy, legal order

#

Sectoral shifts, marriage patterns (delaying fertility in NW Europe), labor discipline, and state capacity all feature prominently in recent debates

Colonialism's Economic Impact and Institutional Legacies

Heterogeneous Effects and Extractive vs. Inclusive Institutions

Colonialism reshaped global economics by:

- Reorienting trade, production, and political institutions for the benefit of the metropole
- Establishing **extractive institutions** (favoring raw material exports, limiting local entrepreneurial growth) in densely populated or malaria-prone regions (Latin America, Africa, South Asia)

- Creating **inclusive institutions** (with property rights, broader suffrage) in settler colonies with mortal climates (e.g., US, Canada, Australia)

#

Empirical findings:

• • Settler mortality rates predict present-day income, via their influence on institutional development.

- Today, up to two-thirds of cross-country income variation can be attributed to historical institutional differences linked to colonial governance strategies.

Type of Colony	Institutional Legacy	Current Economic Outcome
Settler (US, Canada)	Inclusive, democratic	High prosperity
Extractive (Congo, India)	Authoritarian, exploitative	Persistent poverty/inequality

#

Ongoing Legacies

Resource dependency, weak political systems, and marginalization of ethnic groups persist in large part due to **the way colonial economies and societies were structured**, while postcolonial efforts at reform often struggle to overcome these entrenched disadvantages.

<u>Real Wages and Consumption Pre- and Post-Industrialization</u>

The Wage Gap, Consumption, and the Standard of Living

The **real wage** (wage/price index) is central to historical livelihoods analysis. Prior to the 19th century, real wage trends (corrected for cost of basic subsistence) reflect

stagnation and crisis. The Industrial Revolution saw real wages in Britain and parts of NW Europe **rise tenfold** by the 20th century, while those in most of Asia and Africa remained flat —manifesting and sharpening the Great Divergence.

Region	Real Wages, 1750s	Real Wages, 1900s	Consumption Patterns
London	~3–4× subsistence	>8–10× subsistence baselines	Rising calories, luxury goods
Amsterdam	~3× subsistence	>6× by 19th century	Similar to above
Yangzi Delta	~1.5× subsistence	1–1.2×	Basic, little improvement
India	~1–1.5×	1–1.2×	Little diversification

#

Wage data (silver and grain wages) show that while some regions (Yangzi Delta, South India) approached NW European standards for a time, only Northwestern Europe maintained—and then accelerated—gains after 1800

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Modern Wage Divergence and Consumption

Official datasets (ILO, World Bank, OECD) show that wage trends since 1820 have mirrored, and often lagged, GDP per capita growth; wage gaps widened rapidly in the 19th century and then shrank modestly in the late 20th as some emerging economies began closing the gap (East Asia, parts of Latin America)

Technology, Sustainability, and Innovation

Technological Change: Accelerating and Polarizing

The rapid pace of technological advance is both the greatest opportunity and challenge of the 21st century. **Technology is a double-edged sword**: essential for productivity, resilience, and progress—yet capable of entrenching inequality and disrupting societies if poorly managed.

- **Frontier technologies:** AI, robotics, IoT, nanotechnology, biotech, and renewable energy can transform productive capacity and life prospects, but their benefits are unequally distributed.
- **Sustainable development:** Rapid innovation is critical for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but without deliberate policy, it can heighten gaps within and between nations.

Technological Impact	Opportunity	Risk/Challenge
Economic growth	Higher productivity, more jobs	Job displacement, regional gaps
Social dimensions	Better health, connectivity	Exclusion of poor, digital divide
Environment	Renewable energy, pollution control	Increased consumption, e-waste

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Policy implication: Guided investment in human capital and "absorptive capacity" (the ability to adopt and adapt new knowledge) is crucial for nations lagging behind to catch up or leapfrog in development.

Colonial Racial and Ideological Foundations, Education, and Globalization

What is Colonialism?

Colonialism is a distinct mode of domination that involves the extended subjugation and political control of one people by another, typically manifesting through a foreign power establishing direct sovereignty, settling populations, and enforcing legal, economic, and social hierachies in the colonised territory.

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The Racial and Ideological Roots of Empire

Colonial expansion was justified by **racial ideologies**: beliefs in the superiority of Europeans and the corresponding "civilizing mission." Racial thinking structured not only policies towards colonized peoples, but relations within European empires (e.g., Turks atop the Ottoman hierarchy, Aryanism in Nazi Empire). Such ideologies persist in the memory, politics, and, unfortunately, institutional structures inherited from the colonial past.

#

Colonial Education and Its Postcolonial Repercussions

- **Purpose: Educate a small elite and create bureaucratic/technical staff loyal to the colonial regime.**
- **Content:** Curricula imported from Europe, often irrelevant to local needs; missionary and private schools established for upper classes; public provision minimal or restricted.
- **Outcome:** Upon independence, many postcolonial societies inherited fragmented, elitist, or biased education systems, impeding equitable social mobility and weakening skills' match to economic needs.

Efforts at reform (expansion, “Africanization,” curriculum reform) met mixed success. The **legacy is visible in persistent stratification, skills gaps, and language/ cultural tensions**

#

Globalization and Modern Inequality

Modern globalization is both a legacy and an evolution of colonial dynamics:

- **Global trade networks** established during colonialism survive, with former colonies frequently stuck exporting raw materials or low-value-added goods25.
- **Cultural globalization** continues to be marked by hierarchies established in the colonial period, with Western languages, institutions, and norms dominating international life.
- **Inequality:** The North-South divide, shaped by centuries of extraction and institutional disparity, is now reinforced by technological gaps, capital flows, and trade structures favoring wealthy economies.

Colonial/Postcolonial Mechanism	21st-Century Globalization Result
Resource extraction, plantation economies	Commodity dependency, "trade traps"
Education for elite/bureaucrats	Persistent skills/educational gaps
Cultural suppression	Language loss, marginalization
Divide-and-rule policies	Ethnic conflicts, weak states, authoritarianism

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The long arc of the Great Divergence and its associated phenomena—colonialism, industrialization, and globalization—has left indelible imprints on world inequality. Key takeaways:

- **Historical growth models** (Malthusian, Smithian, Solow, Romer) provide necessary lenses for interpreting global economic trajectories and understanding why some societies broke free of stagnation while others remained mired in poverty.
- **Colonial expansion and deindustrialization** created lasting disparities in institutions, education systems, and trade structures, fostering persistent gaps in income and opportunity.
- **Technological change** is indispensable for development but must be harnessed inclusively to avoid sharpening divides.
- **Racial and ideological legacies** shape not only policies of the past but the structures of present-day societies—from who controls capital and land, to who enjoys educational and political rights.
- **Globalization** connects, but also divides—reflecting colonial legacies in trade, education, and culture.

For progress toward equality and sustainable development:

- Invest in universal, relevant education and skill-building.
- Foster institutions that protect rights, encourage innovation, and distribute political and economic power widely.
- Design technology and globalization policies that prioritize inclusion, sustainability, and local agency.