

On the joint evolution of culture and institutions

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8th Winter School on Inequality and social choice theory
Social Cohesion and public policy
Alba di Canazei, January, 2013

On the economics of culture

Main questions:

- Cultural heterogeneity
- Cultural persistence

Cultural heterogeneity

[show figure on language fractionalization in Asia]

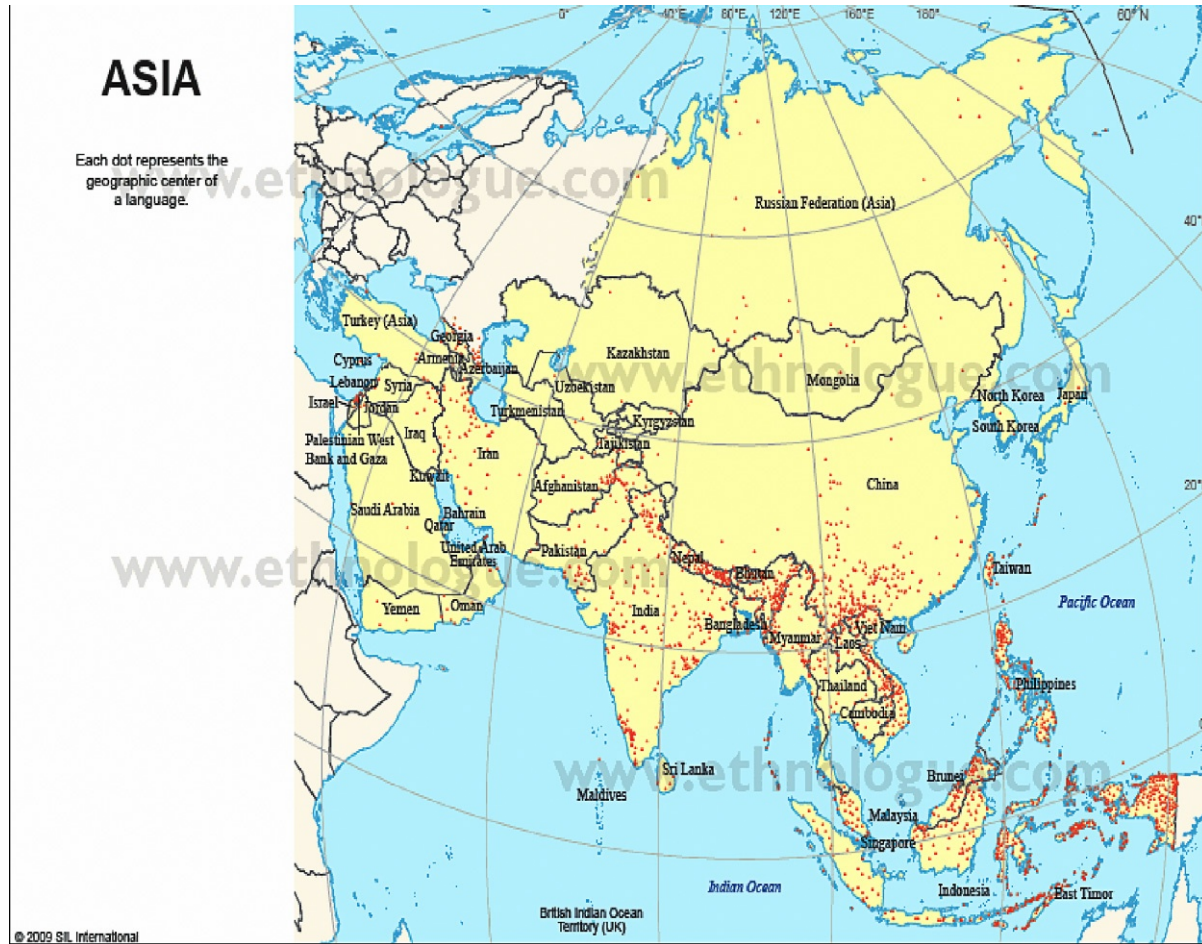


Figure 5 Languages spoken in Asia. Source: www.ethnologue.com

Cultural (or is it institutional?) persistence

- Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001) - protection of property rights
- La Porta, Lopez de Silanes, Shleifer and Vishny (1999) - legal origin on income.
- Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales (2008) - free city-states in medieval Italy on trust.
- Nunn and Wantchekon (2008) - slave trade on trust
- Grosjean (2009) - ottoman domination on corruption.
- Grosjean (2011) - pastoral culture on violence.

Cultural (or is it institutional?) persistence

- Miguel, Saiegh, and Satyanath (2008) - history of civil conflict on violently play in soccer
- Mo (2007) - Chinese writing system on the adoption of collective values.
- Rodríguez-Pose, and Sandall, 2007 - medieval family systems on various indicator of demographic and economic development
- Voigtländer and Voth (2010): pogroms in 1349 in Germany (following the Black Death) on various measures of anti-Semitism in the 20's and 30's
- Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn (2010) - early historical use of animal plough agriculture on female labor force participation.

- The fundamental questions:
 - What accounts for economic prosperity?
 - What stands at its *origin*?
- Their translation in in economic/statistical speak:
 - What is the single univariate cause of GDP growth? E.g., D. Acemoglu and J. Robinson, *Why nations fail*, E.g., D. Acemoglu and J. Robinson, *Why nations fail*, Ch. 2, *Theories that don't work*, 2012. .

The myth of the origin

- The *origin* of the Mafia in Sicily
 - a price shock on sulfur and lemon in the 1850's (Buonanno, Durante, Prarolo, and Vanin, 2012),
 - lack of city states (because of Norman domination) in the XIV'th century (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2007),
 - the Paleolithic split into nomadic pastoralism in 7th millennium BC (Alinei, 2007).
- The *origin* of all languages:
 - Babel tower incident on May 5th, 1491 B.C., Ussher (1650).

- The method:
 - historical natural experiments where institutions are varied in geographical units with common geographical characteristics, culture, and other possible socio-economic determinants of future prosperity
- Some successful examples:
 - the institutional design of colonial empires, the more extractive the higher settlers' mortality rates (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001);
 - the spanish colonial policy regarding the forced mining labor system in Peru' (Dell, 2010);
 - the U.S.-Mexico border separating the city of Nogales (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2010);
 - the border separating the island of Hispaniola into two distinct political and institutional systems, Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Diamond, 2010).

Some critical issues

- The assumption that the distinct institutions arise in otherwise common environments is disputable: settlers' mortality rates correlated with natives' (see e.g., Alsan, 2012, on tse-tse fly).
- The identification of the natural experiment as a change in institution is often debatable, as cultural attitudes affect institutional set-up: Puritans, Cavaliers, Quakers, Scots-Irish in early waves of immigration into America, Fischer (1989); Genoese and Maghrebi traders, Greif (1994); bourgeois values behind Magna Charta etc. in Medieval England, McCloskey (2006, 2010).
- Historical natural experiment does not imply a single cause;
- Similar arguments for culture as the cause of prosperity: individual values about the scope of application of norms of good conduct in Europe, Tabellini (2008); social capital in Italy, Putnam (1993); university reform in Italy, Durante, Labartino, and Perotti (2011); voting reform again in Italy, Nannicini, Stella, Tabellini, and Troiano (2010).

Basic (if obvious) claims

- Institutions and cultural traits evolve jointly.
 - political institutions like city states in Italy in the Middle Age and civic capital (Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2007 and 2010),
 - industrialization and social capital in Indonesia (Miguel, 2003),
 - the technology of plough, patriarchal institutions and gender attitudes (Alesina and Giuliano, 2011).
- Cultural traits can also change rapidly, jointly with institutional changes:
 - attitudes towards corruption in Hong Kong in the last decades after various successful institutional efforts (Clark, 1987 and 1989; see also Hauk and Saez-Marti', 2002),
 - attitudes towards redistribution after the institution of welfare states in Europe (Alesina and Angeletos, 2005; Alesina and Giuliano, 2010) and in East Germany after unification (Alesina and Fuchs Schuendeln, 2005);
 - social/civic/human capital after colonization (Glaeser, La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanez, Shleifer, 2004; Easterly and Levine, 2012; and Bisin and Kulkarni, 2012).

On the joint dynamics of culture and institutions

- On to modeling:
 - Adapt model of cultural dynamics
 - Develop model of institutional dynamics

On the dynamics of culture

- Bisin and Verdier (1998, 2000a, 2001a) building on Cavalli Sforza and Feldman (1973, 1981) in evolutionary biology and of Boyd and Richerson (1985) in anthropology; Bisin and Verdier (2010) for a recent survey.

On the dynamics of culture

- *Dichotomous cultural trait* in the population, $\{a, b\}$.
- Fraction of individuals with trait $i \in \{a, b\}$, q^i .
- *Reproduction* is *a-sexual* and each parent has one child.
- *Direct vertical* (parental) socialization and *horizontal/oblique socialization* in society at large:
 - i) direct vertical socialization with probability d^i ;
 - ii) a child from a family i , if not directly socialized (probability $1 - d^i$), is horizontally/obliquely socialized by picking the trait of a role model chosen randomly in the population (i.e., he/she picks trait i with probability q^i and trait $j \neq i$ with probability $q^j = 1 - q^i$).

- Probability that a child from a family with trait i is socialized to trait j :

$$\begin{aligned}P^{ii} &= d^i + (1 - d^i)q^i \\P^{ij} &= (1 - d^i)(1 - q^i)\end{aligned}$$

- Dynamics of the fraction of the population with trait i :

$$\dot{q}^i = q^i(1 - q^i)(d^i - d^j). \quad (1)$$

On the dynamics of culture

- Utility to a cultural trait i parent of a type j child, $i, j \in \{a, b\}$, $V^{ij}(q^i)$
- *Cultural intolerance* of trait i , $\Delta V^i(q^i) = V^{ii}(q^i) - V^{ij}(q^i)$,
- Socialization costs, $C(d^i)$.
- Direct socialization is then the solution to

$$d^i = d(q^i, \Delta V^i(q^i)), \quad (2)$$

of the parental socialization problem:

$$\max_{d^i \in [0,1]} -C(d^i) + P^{ii}V^{ii}(q^i) + P^{ij}V^{ij}(q^i), \text{ s. t. } 1).$$

On the dynamics of culture

- The dynamics of the fraction of the population with cultural trait i is then determined by equation (1), evaluated at d^i satisfying (2).
- Under relatively natural assumptions about preferences, cultural transmission satisfies *cultural substitution*: $\Delta V^i(q^i) \geq 0$, $d^i(q^i, \Delta V^i(q^i))$ is a continuous, strictly decreasing function in q^i , and, moreover, $d^i(1, \Delta V^i(q^i)) = 0$.
- In this case, *the stationary states of the population dynamics are $(0, 1, q^{i*})$, where q^{i*} is culturally heterogeneous. Moreover, the culturally heterogeneous stationary state is globally stable, that is, $q^i(t, q_0^i) \rightarrow q^{i*}$, for any $q_0^i \in (0, 1)$.*

On the dynamics of institutions

- Acemoglu (2003) and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) study political institutions, notably the shift between dictatorship and democracy and viceversa;
- Guimaraes and Sheedy (2010) extend these analyses while grounding them in the theory of coalition formation;
- Levine and Modica (2012) have evolutionary approach.

On the dynamics of institutions

- Agents separated into homogeneous groups in terms of relevant characteristics, e.g., preferences (including cultural traits), resources, and technologies.
- Action of agents of group i , a^i ($\mathbf{a} = \{a^i\}_i$ is the vector).
- The (vector of) economic policies in society, t .
- Parametrization of economic institutions (the distinction between economic policies and economic institutions will be clearer later), θ .
- Agents of group i have preferences represented by an indirect utility function:

$$u^i(a^i, t; \theta, \mathbf{q})$$

On the dynamics of institutions

- Identify political institutions with the weights in the social choice problem which determines economic policies: weight associated to each agent of group i , $\alpha^i \geq 0$ - normalized so that $\sum_i \alpha^i q^i = 1$ ($\alpha = \{\alpha^i\}_i$).
- The social choice problem for the determination of t , given political institutions α , economic institutions θ , and the distribution of the population by groups \mathbf{q} is as follows:

$$\max_{t \in T} \sum_i \alpha^i q^i u^i(a^i, t; \theta, \mathbf{q}) \quad (3)$$

On the dynamics of institutions

- Political institutions lack commitment, so that the solution of the social choice problem results in a map $T : A \rightarrow T$ which is anticipated by agents when choosing their actions a^i , for any i .
- Each agent of type i then solves the following choice problem:

$$\max_{a^i} u^i(a^i, T(\mathbf{a}); \theta, \mathbf{q}) \quad (4)$$

- *An equilibrium is a (\mathbf{a}, t) such that i) each element a^i of \mathbf{a} solves (its corresponding) choice problem (4) given the policy map T ; ii) the policy map T solves the social choice problem (3); and the policy choice t satisfies $t = T(\mathbf{a})$.*

- Let

$$\begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{a}(\alpha, \theta, \mathbf{q}) \\ t(\alpha, \theta, \mathbf{q}) \end{bmatrix}$$

denote the equilibrium map as a function of the state variables $(\alpha, \theta, \mathbf{q})$.

- Future political and economic institutions are chosen each generation by the present institutional mechanism. Denoting the future with a prime, institutional change is determined by the solution of the following problem:

$$\max_{\alpha', \theta'} \sum_i \alpha^i q^i u^i(\mathbf{a}(\alpha', \theta', \mathbf{q}'), t(\alpha', \theta', \mathbf{q}'); \theta', \mathbf{q}') \quad (5)$$

What can I do now

- Can study now joint dynamics of α and \mathbf{q} in different context.
- Can identify *cultural and institutional multipliers*, by means of comparative dynamics (change initial α while keeping \mathbf{q} constant).
- Can study qualitative conditions for large multipliers, *complementarity and substitability between culture and institutions* - see next rough examples.

Example: Property rights and bourgeois values

Optimal extraction problem in this economy - $\alpha^a = 1$.

$$\max_{\{c_i\}_i} u_a(c_a)$$

subject to:

$$c_a + c_b = q^b \gamma l_b,$$

where

$$l_b \in \arg \max u_b(c_b(l_b), l_b)$$

Example: Property rights and bourgeois values

- As γ increases an institutional setting with $\alpha^b > 0$ could be optimally chosen.
- In this case, ΔV^b increases, other things equal; and so does q_t^b over time; which in turn strengthens incentives to increase α^b

→ *complementarity* between culture and institutions

→ *large* cultural multiplier

Example: Welfare state and work ethic

- Preferences over consumption, c , and hours worked, l :

$$u_i(c, l) = \ln c + \theta_i \ln (1 - l) \quad \text{with } \theta_i > 0$$

- Agents differ in terms of their preferences for leisure, θ_i , with $\theta_a < \theta_b$.
- q denote the fraction of individuals of type a (with a "work ethic") in the population.

Example: Welfare state and work ethic

Optimal redistributive fiscal policy in this economy (Mirlees problem) - $\alpha^b = 1$.

$$\max_{t, \{l_i, c_i\}_{i=a,b}} \ln c_b + \theta_b \ln(1 - l_b)$$

subject to:

$$c_a = (1 - t)wl_a$$

$$c_b = wl_b + \frac{q}{1 - q}twl_a$$

$$\ln c_a + \theta_a \ln(1 - l_a) \geq \ln c_b + \theta_a \ln(1 - l_b)$$

$$\ln c_b + \theta_b \ln(1 - l_b) \geq \ln c_a + \theta_b \ln(1 - l_a)$$

$$\frac{1 - l_i}{l_i} \geq \theta_i, \quad i = a, b$$

Example: Welfare state and work ethic

- Agents of type a : unrestricted labor supply:

$$l_a = \frac{1}{1 + \theta_a}.$$

- Agents of type b : work less than unrestricted labor supply:

$$l_b < \frac{1}{1 + \theta_b}.$$

- The consumption (after tax income) of agents of type a is higher:

$$c_a > c_b.$$

- The labor supply of agents of type b , l_b , and the per-capita transfers they receive, $\frac{q}{1-q} twl_a$, are decreasing with the fraction of agents of type a in the population, q ; $ql_a + (1 - q)l_b$ decreases when q decreases.

Example: Welfare state and work ethic

When equilibrium allocations result from the optimal redistributive fiscal policy,

$$\Delta V^b > 0 \text{ and } \Delta V^a = 0$$

that is, only agents of type b , with 'no work ethic', socialize their children. Hence:

- The marginal tax rate decreases over time and tends to 0 with q .
- The extent of the redistribution, $\frac{q}{1-q} twl_a$, also decreases over time and tends to 0 as $q_t \rightarrow 0$.
- The difference in the equilibrium labor supplies across types, $l_a^* - l_b^*$ decreases over time; and, as $q_t \rightarrow 0$, both agents' labor supplies tend to be undistorted with respect to the first best, $l_i = \frac{1}{1+\theta_i}$, for $i = \{a, b\}$.
- The average labor supply, $q_t l_a + (1 - q_t) l_b$ decreases over time as $q_t \rightarrow 0$.

Example: Welfare state and work ethic

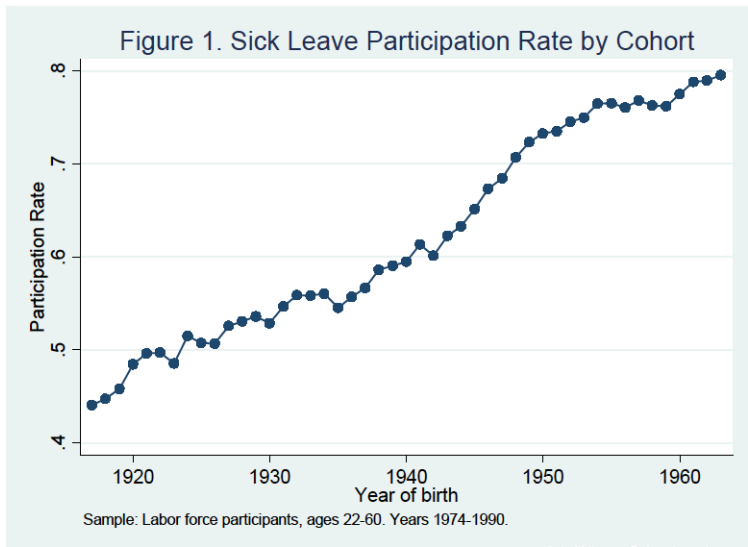
- As q decreases an institutional setting with $\alpha^b < 0$ could be optimally chosen.
- In this case, $\Delta V^a = 0$, other things equal; and so $q_t^a \rightarrow 0$ over time; which in turn may strengthen incentives to decrease α^b

→ *substitutability* between culture and institutions

→ *negative(?)* cultural multiplier

Example: Welfare state and work ethic

From M. Ljunge, 2011:



Conclusions

- Joint evolution of culture and institutions is *west*: go west, young man, go west!
- Modeling objective: abstraction without formal generality

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