



Divergent Paths: How Culture and Institutions Have Shaped North American Growth

Marc Egnal

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Why are some countries without an apparent abundance of natural resources, such as Japan, economic success stories, while other languish in the doldrums of slow growth. In this comprehensive look at North American economic history, Marc Egnal argues that culture and institutions play an integral role in determining economic outcome. He focuses his examination on the eight colonies of the North, five colonies of the South (which together made up the original thirteen states), and French Canada. Using census data, diaries, travelers' accounts, and current scholarship, Egnal systematically explores how institutions (such as slavery in the South and the seigneurial system in French Canada) and cultural arenas (such as religion, literacy, entrepreneurial spirit, and intellectual activity) influenced development. He seeks to answer why three societies with similar standards of living in 1750 became so dissimilar in development. By the mid-nineteenth century, the northern states had surged ahead in growth, and this gap continued to widen into the twentieth century. Egnal argues that culture and institutions allowed this growth in the North, not resources or government policies. Both the South and French Canada stressed hierarchy and social order more than the drive for wealth. Rarely have such parallels been drawn between these two societies. Complete numerous helpful appendices, figures, tables, and maps, *Divergent Paths* is a rich source of unique perspectives on economic development with strong implications for emerging societies.

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