

Contingent Determinants

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We study the channels through which 'deep' historical or geographical determinants of development are connected to present outcomes. We distinguish three classes of theoretical processes that explain this connection—persistence, path-dependence due to multiple equilibria, and transitions between growth regimes—and explore the implications of each for the evolution of deep determinants' impacts. Replicating the analyses of 43 determinants identified in the literature at different points in time, we find that the evolutionary pattern of the impact of determinants is mostly consistent with a hybrid theory of multiple equilibria and transitions between growth regimes. Specifically, we find that the effects of determinants are neither constant nor slowly waning over time, but appear to be increasing or peaking around the turn of the century. Regardless of the origins of these patterns, it appears that the substantive relevance of deep determinants is contingent on the period of analysis.