

Republic of Unfulfilled Potential

Today you are advisors to the leader of the Republic of Unfulfilled Potential (RUP). RUP is a small developing country, which at one time was a colony of Great Britain. Most of the population in this country currently relies on subsistence agriculture, aside from a few large-scale banana plantations that produce for export. However, the capital city is a large and rapidly growing urban area. The country is located in the “tropics” and has a majority Muslim population. The president has convened her top advisors to talk about the country’s economic future.

Each group will have 15 minutes to discuss evidence from the texts (and to a lesser extent, from lectures) within the group. Each group will then present findings for no more than 5 minutes. After each group presents, the other groups will have 3 minutes to ask that group questions in order to inform themselves as advisors.

Group 1:

The president has recently become despondent about the RUP’s chances for development, saying that the geography and culture make it impossible for it to develop. You should lay out in detail why the president might think that these factors matter, then provide her with compelling counterarguments, drawing on the readings and country cases. If not geography and culture, what factors should the president focus on?

Primary evidence from: Acemoglu & Robinson, Rodrik, Gershenkron

Group 2:

The president proposes that the best solution would be to close RUP off from the world economy completely in order to break its exploitative relationship with the developed world. Lay out the logic behind her argument, and then provide her with compelling counterarguments, drawing on the readings and country cases. As her advisors, why should or shouldn’t the country close itself off?

Primary evidence from: Frank, Johnson, Bates

Group 3:

Your job is to convince the president that the state SHOULD play a strong role in the country’s economic development. Focus on how the

state can help foster the rise of industry and the characteristics of the bureaucracy and leaders that will allow it to do so effectively. Draw explicitly from the reading and use country cases to demonstrate that a developmental state, rather than the market or culture, is primarily responsible for rapid industrialization.

Primary evidence from: Chalmers Johnson, Rodrik, Gershenkron

Group 4:

Your job is to convince the president that the state should NOT play a strong role in the country's economic development. Focus on the pitfalls to widespread state involvement in the economy. What characteristics of the RUP might make it particularly difficult for the state to play a developmental role? Draw explicitly from the reading and country cases.

Primary evidence from: Bates, Rodrik, Johnson

Each group should consider the following:

1. How to graphically represent each author's theory (Ex.: High heels*Cambridge sidewalks --> tripping).
 - a. If your theory has multiple parts, draw those out and then think about how they connect to one another.
 - b. Think about the logical and chronological relationships of the explanatory and dependent variables your authors propose. If anything is inconsistent or confusing, make a note of it.
2. Which conditions in the RUP would be most conducive to growth. In particular, consider the impact of regime type, the population's level of education, the relationship between the bureaucracy/state and society, who the leader relies on to stay in power, what the international context is etc. Why do these conditions matter? You may assume anything you want about these characteristics for the purposes of the debate, but make clear when you are presenting what you are assuming.
3. What cases should you cite as examples?