**I**

1. **Which factors explain the rise of Europe relative to Asia in terms of economic growth and overseas expansion before the industrial age?**

Essentially two sorts of factors explain the rise of Europe relative to Asia. The first refers to the institutions existing in the two parts of the world. European rulers, even those of an absolutist sort, did not govern in an unlimited manner. Contrary to Asian despots, their power was limited in a series of ways: by external moral principles (derived from religion) and by other social and political forces (particularly the Church and the nobility) that checked their power in a material way. The result was that they had to grant a certain degree of freedom to the functioning of markets as well as acting in a considerably more predictable way. As a consequence, investors felt more secure in their activity, as they did not fear expropriation, thus increasing investment and, consequently, the capital-labour ratio. A higher capital-labour ratio gave Europe higher productivity and, thus, higher economic growth, allowing the continent to be richer even before the industrial age.

The second set of factors refers to the natural environment, which was much less prone to natural catastrophes. The major impact of this feature on the economy was not necessarily felt in the destruction of resources but rather in demographic terms. The fact that the Europeans felt less such disasters allowed them to adopt a demographic regime in which the birth rate was adjusted to the available resources, contrary to Asia, where the demographic regime was one of high unconditional birth rates. Asians had to guarantee a large enough population stock to rebuild the habitat that was destroyed by the catastrophes. Europeans could control the birth rate by increasing or decreasing the age of marriage or by increasing or decreasing the number of celibate people. The result again was that Europe could maintain a higher capital-labour ratio (not by increasing capital but by decreasing labour pressure on existing capital), granting it higher productivity and economic growth.

**I**

1. **Please identify the main phases of the seventeenth century English Revolution.**

The main fact leading to the English Revolution was the growing tension between king and parliament over the issue of taxes and the financing of war. There was a lasting tradition in England of the king summoning the parliament in order to consult with it for the raise of new taxes, or the increase of existing ones. However, the Stuart dynasty showed appreciation of the continental monarchies, in which the practice was much less established. They conducted, thus, various military campaigns in an environment of increasing tension with the parliament, which was not willing to allow for higher taxation. The climax was reached between 1629 and 1640, when Charles I ruled alone.

When he decided to call the parliament again, in 1640, the environment was one of extreme tension. Between 1640 and 1642 king and parliament entered into a conflict with no reconciliation in sight. Finally, in 1642, the parliament took the unprecedented step of calling for the king’s resignation, leading the king to another unprecedented step: to storm into the parliament and arrest various of its members. The parliament no longer recognized legitimacy to the king. A civil war ensued ending up with the parliament’s victory in 1645. This led to the instauration of a republic, the Commonwealth, formally ruled by the parliament but in fact in the hands of the most successful military man on the parliament’s side: Oliver Cromwell, who ruled as a sort of first military dictator in History.

Unable to find a successor to Cromwell when he died in 1660, the parliament had to call Charles II (the son of Charles I) to power, thus restoring the monarchy. But this was no solution to the tension between the two instances of power. It was necessary to wait until 1688, when the parliament called William of Orange to help it in its fight with the king, in a new brief civil war. Again parliament won, but this time was able to impose on the new king a full set of limits to his power, granting the parliament the upper hand in the new political structure of the country.

**I**

**3. Liberalism and democracy are sometimes seen as equivalent terms. Do you think it is true or do you think they should be distinguished in some way? Please elaborate.**

With the rise of the Western liberal democracies after 1945, liberalism and democracy have come to be frequently seen as equivalent terms. Whilst it is true that the former has tended to be linked historically to the rise of the latter, there are nonetheless fundamental differences between both concepts.

Liberalism is essentially a political ideology, borne out of the liberal revolutions in England, America and France. As a reaction against *ancient régime* type polities, it aimed primarily at limiting the arbitrary power of the Crown, advocating such measures as the division of powers, the clear distinction between the public and private spheres, and greater political and civic rights. Democracy, on the other hand, refers to a model of political governance, in which the electoral principle is posited as a central tenet. Through universal franchise and free elections, the political officials are duly chosen to perform their duties within the democratically organized institutional framework.

History has shown the association of both concepts to be a gradual process, not exempt of backlashes and contradictions. Thus, for much of the Nineteenth Century, ‘classical liberals’ were noticeably opposed to universal enfranchisement (the vote was seen as the prerogative of the educated elite). As a consequence, they presided over non-democratic liberal regimes. The perceived insensitivity of liberalism to the social question was also at the root of strong backlashes against both liberalism and democracy, as was the case with the Communist experiment in the Soviet Union. Some regimes today still emphasize the differences between both concepts.

**I**

1. **Was the Soviet Union a totalitarian State? Answer with references to the different schools of interpretation of the regime.**

This question has originated considerable debate among historians. During the Cold War, and most especially with Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization in the mid-1950s, Western Sovietology tended to view the Soviet experiment as authoritarian rather than totalitarian. As the regime’s most repressive aspects were softened, culminating in the dual process of perestroika and glasnost under Gorbachev, the Soviet experiment even came to be interpreted in the light of modernization theory. According to this theory, the Soviet regime was little more than another experiment in social-economic modernization in a backward country. Its institutional structure, if rigid, was perceived as allowing for the representation of the various interests in the social-economic life of the Soviet Union. According to this school of interpretation, the Soviet experiment was likely to redeem itself and return to the ‘genuine’ socialist ideals expressed by Lenin - which the temporary ‘aberration’ of Stalinism was seen as having halted. Accordingly, it failed to anticipate the collapse of the regime in 1989.

Other historians, such as Martin Malia, criticized this approach for its biased ideological stance. Instead they defended that the Soviet experiment had never ceased to be totalitarian - whatever the perceived intensity of this totalitarianism throughout the various phases of the regime. This was shown first in the way historians in Eastern Europe, who experienced Soviet rule first hand, had adopted the totalitarian approach first elaborated by Hannah Arendt. The regime was totalitarian not only in terms of its institutional organization, but more importantly in the way it constituted the State-imposed pursuit of a rigidly-defined ideological (utopian) vision which, according to Malia, was doomed to failure from the very beginning.

**I**

1. **Do you believe there is some explanation as for why modern economic growth started in Europe in the eighteenth century?**

Production theory tells us that the main engines of economic growth are capital accumulation and technological change. This means that, naturally, modern economic growth in Europe was the result of both these forces. Any explanation of why in Europe and of why in the eighteenth century has to accommodate this.

The best candidate for such a general explanation is institutions, namely the new liberal institutions introduced in Europe (and in the West more generally) between the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century. The main principles of liberalism are favourable to capital accumulation because they are favourable to investment. Liberalism seeks to protect private property and property rights. By doing so, governments adopting such principles do not intervene in the economy in an unpredictable way. Predictability is essential for investment, as it is an activity in which losses (sometimes large ones) precede gains. An investor has to be sure that he will not be expropriated (either implicitly or explicitly) during the period of losses. Liberalism assured that protection and gave thus an unprecedented boost to investment.

The principles of liberalism are also favourable to technological change because technological change requires the constant questioning of acquired “truths”. Liberalism meant the introduction of the principles of freedom of expression, something that allowed for old knowledge to be rapidly replaced by new one. Old religious dogmas, for instance, which blocked the advance of knowledge, were systematically questioned and this allowed for the constant flow of technological change that became the mark of modern western economies since the eighteenth century.

Not by chance the country first experiencing a liberal revolution (England) was also the first to enter the age of modern economic growth.

**II**

1. **What is it that you understand by “Great Divergence”?**

Under the impact of the technological, organizational, and political changes spawned by the Industrial Revolution, a small group of favoured Western economies began to experience the process of modern economic growth (i.e. long-term and sustainable) in the early nineteenth century. In contrast, much of the rest of the world remained caught in traditional economic growth and the Malthusian trap, in which any upward trend was offset by population growth. This gap between rich and poor is referred to as the ‘Great Divergence’.

1. **To what does the word Jacobinism refer to? Present two of its main characteristics?**

The term Jacobinism refers to the radical ideology developed in the course of the French Revolution by the Jacobin faction, whose figurehead was Robespierre. It reached power in 1792-1794, during the National Convention. One of its two main features was republicanism. Indeed the Jacobins played a central role in the radicalization of the revolutionary process which eventually led to the execution of Louis XVI. Another was its virulent anti-religious stance. Numerous priests were executed under the so-called ‘Reign of Terror’. The Jacobins also attempted to abolish Christian references from society, a policy epitomized in the adoption of a new ‘revolutionary’ calendar.

**II**

1. **Why did the First World War, which started in Europe, spread throughout the rest of the world?**

It was mainly through the belligerents’ vast colonial empires that the First World War spread overseas. For instance, owing to German expansionism, military engagements rapidly broke out between German South-West Africa and the Portuguese colony of Angola. The involvement of the British dominions (Canada, Australia and New Zealand for example) also contributed to the globalization of the conflict, as did the fact that the fighting spread to the fringes of the Ottoman Empire. The entry of the USA into the conflict in April 1917, after the resumption of German submarine warfare, was another landmark in the globalization of the war.

1. **“The Gulag system was of little importance to the Soviet economy”. Do you agree?**

This statement is incorrect. The Gulag, or network of forced labour camps, played an important role in the Soviet economy. Originally reserved for political opponents, they acquired an increasing significance between 1929 and 1953, when Stalin placed the camps at the service of industrialization (five-year plans) and of the war effort. In this phase, the prisoners (18 million in total) produced a third of the country’s gold, much of its coal and timber, and, in Anne Applebaum’s words, ‘a great deal of almost everything else’. The inmates also carried out vast infrastructural programmes, often in inhospitable regions and under inhuman conditions.