Using the French Revolution as a starting point, the presentation examines the economic effects of exogenously-imposed institutional change on countries following invasions by French Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies. Data is used to test whether institutions:

1) efficiently adapt to a society's characteristics
2) 'evolved' institutions are inherently superior to those rationally designed
3) institutions must be 'appropriate' and cannot be 'transplanted'
4) the French Civil Code has adverse economic effects.

Both at the country and the city level the evidence suggests that areas that were occupied by the French and that underwent radical institutional reform experienced somewhat more rapid economic growth, urbanisation and industrialisation. The findings are broadly consistent with the view that the institutional reforms brought about by the French Revolution had long-run beneficial effects and is not supportive of the four tested hypotheses.