

Dani Rodrik's weblog (<http://rodrik.typepad.com/>)

Unconventional thoughts on economic development and globalization

JULY 18, 2007

New economics columnists at NYT

Via [Greg Mankiw](#), I learn of a new group of rotating economists who will be writing columns for the New York Times. David Leonhardt of the Times writes:

If you read Sunday's business section, you probably noticed that Gregory Mankiw, the Harvard economist, blogger and Republican policy adviser, wrote the Economic View column. His debut as a regular contributor is the start of some changes in our economics coverage.

The View column will now be written by a rotating panel of outside economists. Besides Mr. Mankiw, it will include Alan Blinder, Judith Chevalier, Robert Shiller and Lester Thurow, as well as three of the economists who have been writing the Economic Scene column on Thursdays: Austan Goolsbee, Tyler Cowen and Robert Frank. (The fourth member of the Scene rotation, Hal R. Varian, is leaving to concentrate on his new role as Google's chief economist.)

With one glaring exception (you guess which one...), I think this is an absolutely terrific group. It will make reading the Times a greater pleasure (when I return from my travels.)

But I am puzzled somewhat by the assignment Greg gives his readers:

First, if you count the number of these eight economists who lean left and the number who lean right, perhaps leaving out a few without any particular political viewpoint, what ratio do you get?

I do not quite understand the preoccupation with the political orientation of these economists. Is Greg implying that he and his fellow commentator-economists filter their views on economic matters through an ideological prism?

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JULY 16, 2007

Aid can promote growth, but don't rely on it to do so

This is the message I take from the most comprehensive analysis to date of the cross-national evidence on the effect of aid and growth. The [paper](#) in question is by Raghu Rajan and Arvind Subramanian, both formerly of the IMF. (Rajan is now back at the University of Chicago, and Subramanian is at the Peterson Institute of International Economics.) What sets the paper apart is its careful consideration of causality issues, and its broad scope and coverage, looking at the relationship under a number of different circumstances and settings. Their bottom line:

we find little robust evidence of a positive (or negative) relationship between aid inflows into a country and its economic growth. We also find no evidence that aid works better in better policy or geographical environments, or that certain forms of aid work better than others. Our findings suggest that for aid to be effective in the future, the aid apparatus will have to be rethought.

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