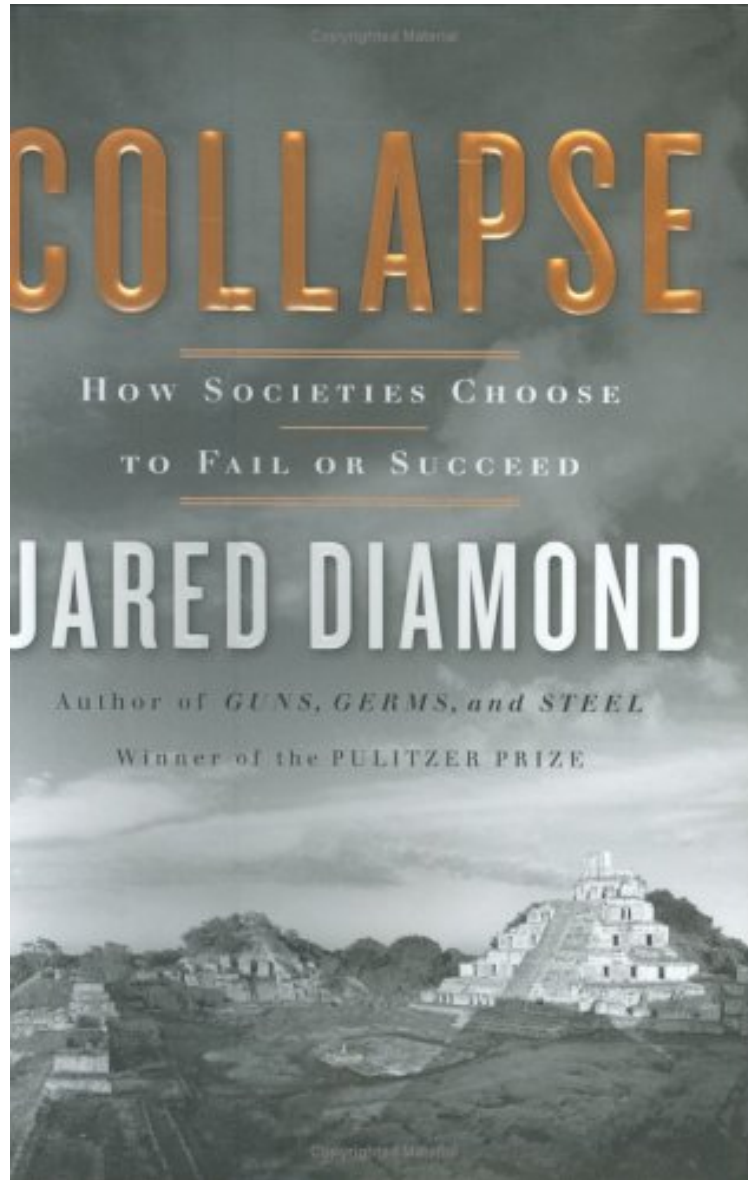


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## Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed

Jared Diamond

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#64740 in Books 2004-12-31 2004-12-29 Ingredients: Example Ingredients Original language: English PDF # 1 9.58 x 1.84 x 6.46l, 2.18 #File Name: 0670033375592 pageshow societies choose to fail or succeed | File size: 70.Mb

**Jared Diamond : Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Important environmental history By Jon Sherr Jared Diamond combines numerous fields in his exploration for why societies collapse. The chapters on the Greenland Norse and

Hispaniola contrasting Haiti and Dominican Republic provide fascinating past and present examples for how environmental issues can drive societies to economic misery, decline and collapse. Diamond provides many other examples, including a discussion on Montana's environmental and social challenges to start the book. As Diamond points out, the environmental challenges we face today are solvable and controllable by human populations. History provides us lessons we can apply to today's policies. Yet, many societies fail to recognize the challenges faced or fail to solve them. Great read if you're interested in environmental history and how environmental problems drive economic and political instability. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A well written book. By Matt Raybaud Collapse by Jared Diamond accurately discusses the concept of societies failing to thrive and falling apart. Within the book, Diamond analyzes societies of the past from all corners of the globe, from the Norse in the Arctic to the Easter Islanders in the Pacific. Through each society Diamond figures out how the territory was set up and what exactly brought down the collapse of the people there. Most of the reasons that societies collapsed had to deal with the environment that they were attempting to live in. For example, if people attempted to colonize an area that had poor soil, that would lead to a variety of problems for the society. The fields there would only be fit for farming or animal raising for a couple of years before the resources were depleted, and it would take a very long time for them to grow back due to poor soil quality. This would mean growing food would have to take place on a very small scale, limiting resources greatly and increasing the risk of starvation. The poor soil would also lead to slow tree growth, meaning that if a society wasn't careful then they would use up their lumber supply quicker than they can grow it back, and without wood a society will risk failure due to lack of supplies. Therefore, poor environment quality as well as quick exhaustion of the lands resources helped cause the collapse of a number of societies in the past. Why would societies of the past overuse their natural resources so fast? Couldn't they see that their ways of life were destroying the landscape? Diamond answers questions such as these, explaining that while it's easy for us in the future to see what the problems were, they weren't so clear for those colonizing the land at the time. Many of the societies that collapsed happened to first settle their while the land was at its best, when the soil was rich and the climate was good for growing, and a time that wouldn't last. The settlers made their homes there and took advantage of the prosperous times, thinking that that was how life always was in that environment. However, when the climate changed back to its poorer state of being, the settlers were unprepared for the rapid degradation of their environment and experienced a tragic collapse. So the settlers of these collapsed societies didn't necessarily exhaust their soils and cut down all of their trees on purpose or out of greed, rather it was due to an unexpected change of events for them that left them unprepared for a harsher climate than the one they were used to. Diamond also discusses modern day societies, those that have been around for centuries and may or may not continue to live on in the future. Examples of such societies range from the lowly populated fields of Montana to the bustling and highly polluted cities of China. Exhausting the soil and other resources of an environment is not just a problem of the past, but rather it lives on today as prevalent as ever before. Resources such as oil, fish and wood are becoming scarce in some areas which will lead to problems in the future if not soon dealt with. Environmental degradation due to abuse by big businesses is a major problem at home and overseas. Pollution from cities and industry are starting to cause problems on a global scale, causing for a need to act to avoid potential collapse. The well-being of the environment today lies in the hands of government, businesses and public opinion. Governments have the power to create regulations about how the environment can be used or preserved in order to stop resource depletion. Businesses have the choice to abuse the environment around them or try their best to remain a clean company. Public opinion helps shape the ideas of both government and big business, as the people are the ones represented in governments and big businesses will have to listen to their paying customers if they wish to stay profitable. Therefore, the well-being of the environment rests in the hands of the people and their decisions. By being informed about the resources that they use and how those resources are acquired and created, the people will have the ability to make good decisions to support environmentally sound practices that will bring about the betterment of society and environments all around the world. I personally believe that Diamond did a good job in explaining his facts, keeping the reader both well informed and interested in what he was saying. While some of what Diamond writes could come off as pessimistic, he is merely trying to portray facts about what has happened in the past and what is happening today. His bleak descriptions of reality are not meant to simply scare the reader into believing that the world as we know it is destined for collapse, but rather that people in today's society just need to be careful with how we treat our environment. Diamond takes time to mention the good things that modern society is doing today to improve our situation, showing that there is still plenty of good news and still hope for the human race. Overall, Diamond does well in educating the reader about collapsed societies of the past. Not only does he go into detail in explaining what aspects of a society went wrong and led to the eventual collapse, but he also takes time to compare the collapsed societies to similar societies that managed to thrive. By doing this, he not only discusses what doesn't work, but also what does work in a society. This extra detail in his writing succeeds in further educating the reader about societal success. In conclusion, Jared Diamond's book Collapse does a decent job in explaining the environmental problems of yesterday and today, and how they have led to problems in different societies around the world, ranging from pollution to the entire collapse of a society. This well-written book describes the good and the bad in our world and tells the reader exactly what can be done to alter the course of our societies so that they can avoid the risk of

potential failure or serious environmental issues such as land degradation or the exhaustion of natural resources. With the knowledge gained from this book, the reader can make educated decisions that can help the bigger picture of society by supporting businesses that are environmentally friendly and avoid the support of practices that might harm the environment further. With the knowledge from this book people can shape our society today so that it can avoid the risk of collapse in the future.<sup>1</sup> of 1 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant review of historical errors that destroyed and annihilated nations. A clear unambiguous warning about the colossal worldwide blunders our world leaders and their nations are heading towards as humans overpopulate, overheat, over-garbage, and over-deplete our one and only earth.

A study of the downfall of some of history's greatest civilizations, written by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, includes coverage of such cultures as the Anasazi, the Maya, and the Viking colony on Greenland, tracing patterns of environmental damage, climate change, poor political choices, and other factors that were pivotal to their demise. 250,000 first printing.

.com Jared Diamond's *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* is the glass-half-empty follow-up to his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. While *Guns, Germs, and Steel* explained the geographic and environmental reasons why some human populations have flourished, *Collapse* uses the same factors to examine why ancient societies, including the Anasazi of the American Southwest and the Viking colonies of Greenland, as well as modern ones such as Rwanda, have fallen apart. Not every collapse has an environmental origin, but an eco-meltdown is often the main catalyst, he argues, particularly when combined with society's response to (or disregard for) the coming disaster. Still, right from the outset of *Collapse*, the author makes clear that this is not a mere environmentalist's diatribe. He begins by setting the book's main question in the small communities of present-day Montana as they face a decline in living standards and a depletion of natural resources. Once-vital mines now leak toxins into the soil, while prion diseases infect some deer and elk and older hydroelectric dams have become decrepit. On all these issues, and particularly with the hot-button topic of logging and wildfires, Diamond writes with equanimity. Because he's addressing such significant issues within a vast span of time, Diamond can occasionally speak too briefly and assume too much, and at times his shorthand remarks may cause careful readers to raise an eyebrow. But in general, Diamond provides fine and well-reasoned historical examples, making the case that many times, economic and environmental concerns are one and the same. With *Collapse*, Diamond hopes to jog our collective memory to keep us from falling for false analogies or forgetting prior experiences, and thereby save us from potential devastations to come. While it might seem a stretch to use medieval Greenland and the Maya to convince a skeptic about the seriousness of global warming, it's exactly this type of cross-referencing that makes *Collapse* so compelling. --Jennifer Buckendorff From Publishers Weekly Starred . In his Pulitzer Prizewinning bestseller *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, geographer Diamond laid out a grand view of the organic roots of human civilizations in flora, fauna, climate and geology. That vision takes on apocalyptic overtones in this fascinating comparative study of societies that have, sometimes fatally, undermined their own ecological foundations. Diamond examines storied examples of human economic and social collapse, and even extinction, including Easter Island, classical Mayan civilization and the Greenland Norse. He explores patterns of population growth, overfarming, overgrazing and overhunting, often abetted by drought, cold, rigid social mores and warfare, that lead inexorably to vicious circles of deforestation, erosion and starvation prompted by the disappearance of plant and animal food sources. Extending his treatment to contemporary environmental trouble spots, from Montana to China to Australia, he finds today's global, technologically advanced civilization very far from solving the problems that plagued primitive, isolated communities in the remote past. At times Diamond comes close to a counsel of despair when contemplating the environmental havoc engulfing our rapidly industrializing planet, but he holds out hope at examples of sustainability from highland New Guinea's age-old but highly diverse and efficient agriculture to Japan's rigorous program of forest protection and, less convincingly, in recent green consumerism initiatives. Diamond is a brilliant expositor of everything from anthropology to zoology, providing a lucid background of scientific lore to support a stimulating, incisive historical account of these many declines and falls. Readers will find his book an enthralling, and disturbing, reminder of the indissoluble links that bind humans to nature. Photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Adult/High School This powerful call to action should be read by all high school students. Diamond eloquently and persuasively describes the environmental and social problems that led to the collapse of previous civilizations and threaten us today. The book's organization makes researching particular regions or types of damage accessible. Unfamiliar words are defined, and mention of a place or issue that has been described in greater detail elsewhere includes relevant page numbers. Students may become impatient with the folksy Montana fishing stories in part one, but once the fascinating account of the vanished civilizations begins, readers are taken on an extraordinary journey. Using the Mayan empire, Easter Island, the Anasazi, and other examples, the author shows how a combination of environmental factors such as habitat destruction, the loss of biodiversity, and degradation of the soil caused complex, flourishing societies to suddenly

disintegrate. Modern societies are divided into those that have begun to collapse, such as Rwanda and Haiti; those whose conservation policies have helped to avert disaster, such as Iceland and Japan; and those currently dealing with massive problems, such as Australia and China. Diamond is a cautious optimist. Some of his most compelling stories show how two groups of people sharing the same land, such as the Norse and Inuit in Greenland, can end up in completely different situations depending on how they address their problems. The solutions discussed are of vital importance: how societies respond to environmental degradation will determine how teens will live their adult lives. As Diamond points out, in a collapsing civilization, being rich just means being the last to starve. Black-and-white photos are included. Kathy Tewell, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.