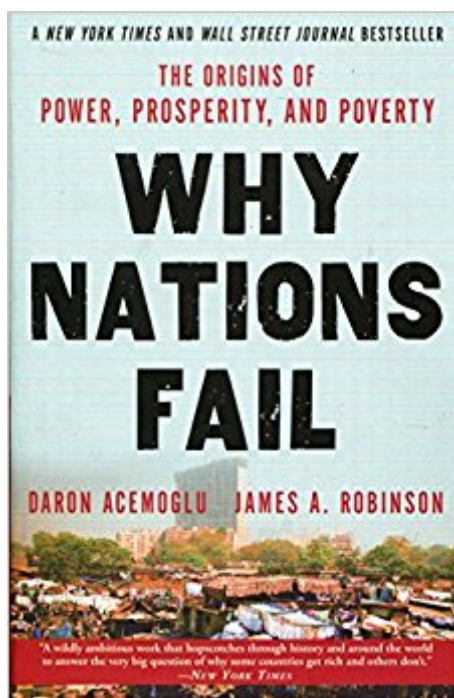


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# Why Nations Fail: The Origins Of Power, Prosperity, And Poverty



## Synopsis

Brilliant and engagingly written, *Why Nations Fail* answers the question that has stumped the experts for centuries: Why are some nations rich and others poor, divided by wealth and poverty, health and sickness, food and famine? Is it culture, the weather, geography? Perhaps ignorance of what the right policies are? Simply, no. None of these factors is either definitive or destiny. Otherwise, how to explain why Botswana has become one of the fastest growing countries in the world, while other African nations, such as Zimbabwe, the Congo, and Sierra Leone, are mired in poverty and violence? Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson conclusively show that it is man-made political and economic institutions that underlie economic success (or lack of it). Korea, to take just one of their fascinating examples, is a remarkably homogeneous nation, yet the people of North Korea are among the poorest on earth while their brothers and sisters in South Korea are among the richest. The south forged a society that created incentives, rewarded innovation, and allowed everyone to participate in economic opportunities. The economic success thus spurred was sustained because the government became accountable and responsive to citizens and the great mass of people. Sadly, the people of the north have endured decades of famine, political repression, and very different economic institutions—with no end in sight. The differences between the Koreas is due to the politics that created these completely different institutional trajectories. Based on fifteen years of original research Acemoglu and Robinson marshal extraordinary historical evidence from the Roman Empire, the Mayan city-states, medieval Venice, the Soviet Union, Latin America, England, Europe, the United States, and Africa to build a new theory of political economy with great relevance for the big questions of today, including: - China has built an authoritarian growth machine. Will it continue to grow at such high speed and overwhelm the West? - Are America's best days behind it? Are we moving from a virtuous circle in which efforts by elites to aggrandize power are resisted to a vicious one that enriches and empowers a small minority? - What is the most effective way to help move billions of people from the rut of poverty to prosperity? More philanthropy from the wealthy nations of the West? Or learning the hard-won lessons of Acemoglu and Robinson's breakthrough ideas on the interplay between inclusive political and economic institutions? *Why Nations Fail* will change the way you look at and understand the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Guest Reviewer: Charles C. Mann on *Why Nations Fail* Charles C. Mann, a correspondent for *The Atlantic*, *Science*, and *Wired*, has written for *Fortune*, *The New York Times*, *Smithsonian*, *Technology Review*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Washington Post*, as well as for the TV network HBO and the series *Law & Order*. A three-time National Magazine Award finalist, he is the recipient of writing awards from the American Bar Association, the American Institute of Physics, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and the Lannan Foundation. His *1491* won the National Academies Communication Award for the best book of the year. He lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. A few years ago, while I was researching a book on the history of globalization, I suddenly realized that I was seeing the same two names on a lot of the smartest stuff I was reading. The names belonged to two economists, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson. Much of their work focused on a single question: Why are poor places poor, and is there something we can do about it? This is one of the most important questions imaginable in economics—indeed, in the world today. It is also one of the most politically fraught. In working on my book, I read numerous attempts by economists, historians and other researchers to explain why most of North America and Europe is wealthy and why most of Asia, Africa and Latin America is not. But these usually boiled down to claims that rich nations had won the game by cheating poor places or that poor places had inherently inferior cultures (or locations) which prevented them from rising. Conservative economists used the discussion as a chance to extol the wide-open markets they already believed in; liberal economists used it to make the attacks on unrestrained capitalism they were already making. And all too often both seemed wildly ignorant of history. I can't recall encountering another subject on which so many people expended so much energy to generate so little light. Acemoglu and Robinson were

in another category entirely. They assembled what is, in effect, a gigantic, super-complete database of every country's history, and used it to ask questions—wicked smart questions. They found unexpected answers—ones that may not satisfy partisans of either side, but have the ring of truth. Why Nations Fail is full of astounding stories. I ended up carrying the book around, asking friends, “Did you know this?” The stories make it a pleasure to read. More important, though, Acemoglu and Robinson changed my perspective on how the world works. My suspicion is that I won't be the only person to say this after reading Why Nations Fail.

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"Should be required reading for politicians and anyone concerned with economic development."  
—Jared Diamond, New York Review of Books "...bracing, garrulous, wildly ambitious and ultimately hopeful. It may, in fact, be a bit of a masterpiece."  
—Washington Post  
—“For economics and political-science students, surely, but also for the general reader who will appreciate how gracefully the authors wear their erudition.”  
—Kirkus Reviews  
—“Provocative stuff; backed by lots of brain power.”  
—Library Journal  
—“This is an intellectually rich book that develops an important thesis with verve. It should be widely read.”  
—Financial Times  
—“A probing . . . look at the roots of political and economic success . . . large and ambitious new book.”  
—The Daily  
—“Why Nations Fail is a splendid piece of scholarship and a showcase of economic rigor.”  
—The Wall Street Journal  
“Ranging from imperial Rome to modern Botswana, this book will change the way people think about the wealth and poverty of nations...as ambitious as Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs, and Steel.”  
—Bloomberg BusinessWeek  
—“The main strength of this book is beyond the power of summary: it is packed, from beginning to end, with historical vignettes that are both erudite and fascinating. As Jared Diamond says on the cover: 'It will make you a spellbinder at parties.' But it will also make you think.”  
—The Observer (UK)  
—“A brilliant book.”  
—Bloomberg (Jonathan Alter)  
—“Why Nations Fail is a wildly ambitious work that hopscotches through history and around the world to answer the very big question of why some countries get rich and others don't.”  
—The New York Times (Christia Freeland)  
“Why Nations Fail is a truly awesome book. Acemoglu and Robinson tackle one of the most important problems in the social sciences—a question that has bedeviled leading thinkers for centuries—and offer an answer that is brilliant in its simplicity and power. A wonderfully readable mix of history, political science, and economics, this book will change the way we think about economic development. Why Nations Fail

is a must-read book." •Steven Levitt, coauthor of *Freakonomics* "You will have three reasons to love this book. It's about national income differences within the modern world, perhaps the biggest problem facing the world today. It's peppered with fascinating stories that will make you a spellbinder at cocktail parties—such as why Botswana is prospering and Sierra Leone isn't. And it's a great read. Like me, you may succumb to reading it in one go, and then you may come back to it again and again." •Jared Diamond, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the bestsellers *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Collapse* "A compelling and highly readable book. And [the] conclusion is a cheering one: the authoritarian extractive institutions like the ones that drive growth in China today are bound to run out of steam. Without the inclusive institutions that first evolved in the West, sustainable growth is impossible, because only a truly free society can foster genuine innovation and the creative destruction that is its corollary." •Niall Ferguson, author of *The Ascent of Money* "Some time ago a little-known Scottish philosopher wrote a book on what makes nations succeed and what makes them fail. *The Wealth of Nations* is still being read today. With the same perspicacity and with the same broad historical perspective, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson have retackled this same question for our own times. Two centuries from now our great-great- . . . -great grandchildren will be, similarly, reading *Why Nations Fail*." •George Akerlof, Nobel laureate in economics, 2001 "Why Nations Fail is so good in so many ways that I despair of listing them all. It explains huge swathes of human history. It is equally at home in Asia, Africa and the Americas. It is fair to left and right and every flavor in between. It doesn't pull punches but doesn't insult just to gain attention. It illuminates the past as it gives us a new way to think about the present. It is that rare book in economics that convinces the reader that the authors want the best for ordinary people. It will provide scholars with years of argument and ordinary readers with years of did-you-know-that dinner conversation. It has some jokes, which are always welcome. It is an excellent book and should be purchased forthwith, so to encourage the authors to keep working." •Charles C. Mann, author of *1491* and *1493* "Imagine sitting around a table listening to Jared Diamond, Joseph Schumpeter, and James Madison reflect on over two thousand years of political and economic history. Imagine that they weave their ideas into a coherent theoretical framework based on limiting extraction, promoting creative destruction, and creating strong political institutions that share power and you begin to see the contribution of this brilliant and engagingly written book." •Scott E. Page, University of Michigan and Santa Fe Institute "This fascinating and readable book centers on the complex joint evolution of political and economic institutions, in good directions and bad. It strikes a delicate

balance between the logic of political and economic behavior and the shifts in direction created by contingent historical events, large and small at critical junctures.' Acemoglu and Robinson provide an enormous range of historical examples to show how such shifts can tilt toward favorable institutions, progressive innovation and economic success or toward repressive institutions and eventual decay or stagnation. Somehow they can generate both excitement and reflection.

• Robert Solow, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 1987 "It's the politics, stupid! That is Acemoglu and Robinson's simple yet compelling explanation for why so many countries fail to develop. From the absolutism of the Stuarts to the antebellum South, from Sierra Leone to Colombia, this magisterial work shows how powerful elites rig the rules to benefit themselves at the expense of the many. Charting a careful course between the pessimists and optimists, the authors demonstrate history and geography need not be destiny. But they also document how sensible economic ideas and policies often achieve little in the absence of fundamental political change.

• Dani Rodrik, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University "Two of the world's best and most erudite economists turn to the hardest issue of all: why are some nations poor and others rich? Written with a deep knowledge of economics and political history, this is perhaps the most powerful statement made to date that institutions matter. A provocative, instructive, yet thoroughly enthralling book.

• Joel Mokyr, Robert H. Strotz Professor of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Economics and History, Northwestern University "A brilliant and uplifting book yet also a deeply disturbing wake-up call. Acemoglu and Robinson lay out a convincing theory of almost everything to do with economic development. Countries rise when they put in place the right pro-growth political institutions and they fail often spectacularly when those institutions ossify or fail to adapt. Powerful people always and everywhere seek to grab complete control over government, undermining broader social progress for their own greed. Keep those people in check with effective democracy or watch your nation fail.

• Simon Johnson, co-author of *13 Bankers* and professor at MIT Sloan "This important and insightful book, packed with historical examples, makes the case that inclusive political institutions in support of inclusive economic institutions is key to sustained prosperity. The book reviews how some good regimes got launched and then had a virtuous spiral, while bad regimes remain in a vicious spiral. This is important analysis not to be missed.

• Peter Diamond, Nobel Laureate in Economics "Acemoglu and Robinson have made an important contribution to the debate as to why similar-looking nations differ so greatly in their economic and political development. Through a broad multiplicity of historical

examples, they show how institutional developments, sometimes based on very accidental circumstances, have had enormous consequences. The openness of a society, its willingness to permit creative destruction, and the rule of law appear to be decisive for economic development.

• Kenneth Arrow, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 1972

• “Acemoglu and Robinson

• two of the world’s leading experts on development

• reveal why it is not geography, disease, or culture which explains why some nations are rich and some poor, but rather a matter of institutions and politics. This highly accessible book provides welcome insight to specialists and general readers alike.

• Francis Fukuyama, author of *The End of History and the Last Man* and *The Origins of Political Order*

• “Some time ago a little known Scottish philosopher wrote a book on what makes nations succeed and what makes them fail. *The Wealth of Nations* is still being read today.

• With the same perspicacity and with the same broad historical perspective, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson have re-tackled this same question for our own times.

• Two centuries from now our great-great-grandchildren will be, similarly, reading *Why Nations Fail*.

• George Akerlof, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2001

• “In this stunningly wide ranging book Acemoglu and Robinson ask a simple but vital question, why do some nations become rich and others remain poor? Their answer is also simple

• because some polities develop more inclusive political institutions. What is remarkable about the book is the crispness and clarity of the writing, the elegance of the argument, and the remarkable richness of historical detail.

• This book is a must read at a moment where governments right across the western world must come up with the political will to deal with a debt crisis of unusual proportions.

• Steve Pincus, Bradford Durfee Professor of History and International and Area Studies, Yale University

• “The authors convincingly show that countries escape poverty only when they have appropriate economic institutions, especially private property and competition. More originally, they argue countries are more likely to develop the right institutions when they have an open pluralistic political system with competition for political office, a widespread electorate, and openness to new political leaders. This intimate connection between political and economic institutions is the heart of their major contribution, and has resulted in a study of great vitality on one of the crucial questions in economics and political economy.

• Gary S. Becker, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 1992

• “This not only a fascinating and interesting book: it is a really important one. The highly original research that Professors Acemoglu and Robinson have done, and continue to do, on how economic forces, politics and policy choices evolve together and constrain each other, and how institutions affect that

evolution, is essential to understanding the successes and failures of societies and nations. And here, in this book, these insights come in a highly accessible, indeed riveting form. Those who pick this book up and start reading will have trouble putting it down. Michael Spence, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2001 "In this delightfully readable romp through 400 years of history, two of the giants of contemporary social science bring us an inspiring and important message: it is freedom that makes the world rich. Let tyrants everywhere tremble!" Ian Morris, Stanford University, author of *Why the West Rules For Now* "Acemoglu and Robinson pose the fundamental question concerning the development of the bottom billion. Their answers are profound, lucid, and convincing." Paul Collier, Professor of Economics, Oxford University, and author of *The Bottom Billion*

I find the topic utterly fascinating: why do some nations prosper, and improve the life of their citizens, and others fail, often disastrously so? Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, both academics, propose a model based on the concepts of "extractive" vs. "inclusive" institutions. They attempt to support their thesis by undertaking a very broad review of economic and historical developments in a spectrum of 30 or so countries. They commence, like medical researchers do when they hope to minimize the number of variables, by examining "twins." In the author's case the "twins" are the cities of Nogales, immediately adjacent, in Arizona, and in Sonora. One is relatively prosperous, the other not so. It is a good start, and later in the book, the author uses the two Koreas. In both cases, geography and culture are relatively constant, which seems to bolster their view that it is the "institutions" that govern the lives of the respective citizens that are causative. However the book can be a bit of a maddening slog in order to find some enjoyable nuggets of information and/or wisdom. For sure, if one establishes a situation in which individuals have incentives to produce they will work harder. So, why is this concept not universally embraced, by corporations and countries? I once set up a "profit-sharing" program for workers in my company; it seemed to change attitudes, improved the operating efficiency and reduce waste. After I left, the owner immediately eliminated it, though he would pontificate on the needs for economic incentives for himself! His outlook was rigid: if he was "sharing" the profits with the workers, he was a loser, and the thought that he might have a slightly smaller percentage of a much bigger pie never entered his mind. The authors confirmed my personal experience time and time again, and expressed it in terms of "The Iron Law of Oligarchy." An



elite would be deposed by "revolutionary forces," only to see those forces turn into a new elite who acted much the same as the old. Among others, the authors cite Ethiopia as an example, where "the Derg" deposed Haile Selassie in 1974, and within four years Mengistu was using the same throne Selassie did. The authors could also have cited George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. I also found the authors' description of how Venice turned into a "museum" to be one of their most concrete examples, in terms of identifying the steps taken by the elites to protect their interests, and eliminate the "profit sharing" with the masses. Likewise, as a counterpoint, there was a good description on how Botswana became the most prosperous country in sub-Saharan Africa. For sure, I believe the "differential diagnosis" to be essential, and therefore comparisons of one historical situation to another can be most useful. But the authors seem to have taken this concept to the extreme, juxtaposing wildly disparate situations, and providing no "connective tissue." For example, chapter 6 contained 10th-12th Century Venice, the Roman Empire, and Axum, in Ethiopia, without any meaningful comparisons. Over and over again the details of the history of a country were included, generally correctly, but for no apparent reason in terms of supporting their thesis. Thus, we are treated to a catalog of Napoleon's military successes, the number of tons of gunpowder the British sold between 1750 and 1807, and Roosevelt's efforts to pack the Supreme Court. And I dare say that if the redundancies were eliminated by a good editor, a hundred pages would be shaved off the book. For example, three times in 50 pages there is the same list of African countries that had descended into civil war; the Battle of Adowa is mentioned at least twice, and there is the relentless mantra of using "extractive" to mean anything bad that is occurring in a country, and "inclusive" for positive developments. There are also the outright errors of Bill Gates' education (p.43) (Gates dropped out of Harvard in his freshman year), and the circulation of the French "Old Franc" until 1992 (p. 388). And then there were the sins of omission. Several readily sprung to mind: all of Scandinavia, Singapore, Malaysia, Dubai, and Canada. Examination of these would have provided some useful counterpoints to one of the author's concluding propositions: "You can't engineer prosperity." And where is the rise of "extractive" institutions in the United States over the past 30 years? Totally omitted. Reviewing the extensive bibliography/references was also instructive. There was Kapuscinski's classic account of the fall of Haile Selassie, *The Emperor*:

Downfall of an Autocrat – but I was astonished to find missing Gunnar Myrdal's equally classic inquiry into the poverty of nations – Asian Drama, An Inquiry Into The Poverty OF Nations Volumes I, II and III (Volumes I, II and III) It is a rich book, which covers a vast swath of human history. But it lacks the "connective tissue" that supports the author's thesis, and thus remains light-years away from any sort of "unified field theory" of development. 3-stars. [Note: Originally posted on February 13, 2012 via the Vine program; reposted on August 18, 2017]

The authors have written a wonderful work. They use numerous examples to fortify their theory of "Why Nations Fail". One doesn't need an advanced degree in Economics or History to appreciate this work. Everyone who is concerned about the future of Western Democracy and particularly the United States should make the effort and take the time to read it. You will see the threat to liberty we face today after reading the 462 pages of this work. Here in the United States the threat of the establishment of extractive government regulation and the end to our inclusive, pluralistic society is dire. Read this great work by these eminent economist.

I bought this book because it was the first one found on the particular subject of "Failed Nations" since I had read "The Collapse of complex Societies" by Joseph Tainter. The two books however are entirely different in the way they answer the fundamental question as to why nations fail. Tainter's theory is that powerful nations collapse because their institutions have become more and more complex and require more and more effort from their citizens with less and less to show for it, with the result that the fringes of the state start to crumble and the people either die off or move away. He cites many examples but the main ones he concentrates upon are Lowland Classic Maya of Central America, the Western Roman Empire, and the collapse of the Chacoan civilization of northern New Mexico. He argues that States ruling without competition compared with those ruling in polities of equal strength, leads him to the conclusion that collapse can only occur in a power vacuum. The authors of this book take an entirely different approach. Their arguments are primarily ones which are based on economical and political institutions. They firmly reject that there are arguments that the reasons nations fail are due to geographic, cultural or ignorance. But they do recognize that all have one thing in common and that the rule is by a narrow elite whose main focus is on maintaining and/or expanding their own interests at the expense of the rest of the population which they govern. The following is a summary of the contents of this book,

which I will comment on later :Chapter 1 SO CLOSE AND YET SO DIFFERENT Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, have the same people, culture, and geography. Why is one rich and one poor?Chapter 2 THEORIES THAT DON'T WORK Poor countries are poor not because of their geographies or cultures, or because their leaders do not know which policies will enrich their citizens. The interests of narrow elites and the long agony of the Congo.Chapter 3 THE MAKING OF PROSPERITY AND POVERTY How prosperity and poverty are determined by the incentives created by institutions, and how politics determines what institutions a nation has. Extractive and inclusive economic and political institutionsChapter 4 SMALL DIFFERENCES AND CRITICAL JUNCTURES: THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY How institutions change through political conflict and how the past shapes the present. The Black Death, the contingent path of history.Chapter 5 "I'VE SEEN THE FUTURE, AND IT WORKS": GROWTH UNDER EXTRACTIVE INSTITUTIONS What Stalin, King Shyaam, the Neolithic Revolution, and the Maya city-states all had in common and how this explains why China's current economic growth cannot lastChapter 6 DRIFTING APART How institutions evolve over time, often slowly drifting apart ãfÂçÃ â ã ã œ Venice, Roman virtues and vices, Roman Britain, Diverging paths.Chapter 7 THE TURNING POINT How a political revolution in 1688 changed institutions in England and led to the Industrial RevolutionChapter 8 NOT ON OUR TURF: BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT Why the politically powerful in many nations opposed the Industrial Revolution and enduring backwardness: Ottoman Empire, Spain, Hapsburg and Russian Empires, Ming and Qing dynasties, Somalia,Chapter 9 REVERSING DEVELOPMENT How European colonialism impoverished large parts of the world ãfÂçÃ â ã ã œ Dutch East Indies, African slave trade, South African apartheid.Chapter 10 THE DIFFUSION OF PROSPERITY How some parts of the world took different paths to prosperity from that of Britain ãfÂçÃ â ã ã œ Australia, the French Revolution, Europe, Japan; The roots of world inequality.Chapter 11 THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE How institutions that encourage prosperity create positive feedback loops that prevent the efforts by elites to undermine them. British Reform acts, Trust busting in the US, Failed attempts to pack Supreme Courts.Chapter 12 THE VICIOUS CIRCLE How institutions that create poverty generate negative feedback loops and endure. Collapse of infrastructure in Sierra Leone, Land grab in Guatemala, Slavery to Jim Crow, Oligarchy in Ethiopia.Chapter 13 WHY NATIONS FAIL TODAY Institutions, institutions, institutions and why nations fail. ; Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Colombia, Argentina, North Korea, Uzbekistan, Egypt,Chapter 14 BREAKING THE MOLD How a few countries changed their economic trajectory by changing their institutions. Botswana, US Civil Rights, ChinaãfÂçÃ â ã ã œs rebirthChapter 15 UNDERSTANDING PROSPERITY AND POVERTY How the world could have been different and how understanding this can explain why

most attempts to combat poverty have failed – Authoritarian growth (China), Failure of foreign aid (Afghanistan), Empowerment (Brazil) The main thesis that the authors put forward is fairly straightforward. First of all the state must be sufficiently centralized that its rulers and ruling elite can actually govern it. The second is that Economic and Political institutions established in the state are inclusive enough that a significant portion of the population have significant powers to prevent the control by a narrow elite, and that the state is governed by the rule of law in which the rights of all – justice, property, education, economic and political - are adequately protected and are difficult to be removed. The concept of contingent events – like the Black Death in which a major portion of the population died, provided an opportunity for a slow but sure change in the political development of western European countries as the rulers had to start to take into account the needs and demands of those which supported them – leading to the development of large cities, with merchants and guilds. Another was the discovery of the Americas which – particularly in Latin America – was primarily a looting operation that simply replaced the native ruling elites with European ones. The authors use the establishment of the North American colonies (which was a century later than that of Latin America) to describe how those colonists found it extremely difficult to exploit the local population and had to be self sufficient for their own survival. The slow development of a larger more wealthy portion of the English populations led to the English Civil War, and the eventual establishment of a more constitutional monarchy. This is described in some detail in Chapter 7 and showed how Britain and subsequently the US industrialized and slowly established more and more inclusive institutions which are so important for the development of their modern democracies. There are course, many descriptions of the ups and downs of this progress, but the book does an excellent job of explaining the successes and failures of various states in all continents of the world – and why this has resulted in the current world political reality. The difficulty I have with this book is that the authors are unable to offer solutions to dealing with the problems of failed states. I suppose that is probably too much to ask for, and the final chapter makes an effort to address this issue – which is more or less an appeal to influential persons to be informed of the failures of aid programs to alleviate poverty, and to understand why those policies may fail if the funds only end up in the hands of the oligarchic rulers. And they certainly do not address the many powerful international organizations such as FIFA, IOC, (and to some extent the UNO) which are observably corrupt and tend only to serve the – “narrow elite – who run those organizations. I am also dubious about some of the arguments used in favour of – “Creative Destruction –

which seem to be more effective in more successful democracies than those which are anything but democratic. What is the purpose of creative destruction when it can also destroy the foundations of a developing state? I do agree that the development of a successful state is a slow one although it appears that the French experience after the Revolution and the Napoleonic era effectively swept away the institutions of the old regime, such that a new structure had to be created in its place and today (even if you do not agree with its political philosophies) it is one of the more powerful and successful democracies. And I agree with the proposition that you cannot legislate prosperity. I think, however, that the authors are being somewhat optimistic in arguing that current success stories will actually lead to long term success. What is interesting about the book is there is little or no discussion on the impact of religion on the development of the state which is probably just as well, because once you can get on that topic then you enter the realm of beliefs and articles of faith, and any possibility of reasoned analysis tends to be glossed over as irrelevant. I found this book to be very readable and the arguments in support of their thesis very easy to follow. But as they say, economics is a dismal science and there are indeed few heroes and many villains in this account. I can understand why this book has been so well received, because it provides strong justification as to why the western democracies have been so successful. I would certainly recommend it to other readers who have similar interests to my own. I give it 5 stars.

A great book!!! I could not put it down. This book is well written, and has very good and in depth research. This should be a required text in all colleges and Universities. Every African and third world leader should get a copy. This is a must read for all candidates of the impending elections in Liberia to succeed Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. I suggest that Riva Livinson; and other lobbyists involved in Africa ought to read this book multiple times, keep a copy at their office, and give copies to each of their clients. In addition those in the US Foreign Service, the State Department and Congress who handle African and third world nations, should have this on their reading list.

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