




POOR COUNTRIES ARE NOT DESTINED TO STAY POOR TO DIE

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"Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo, i.e. goods and technology and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?"

A question posed to Diamond by Yali, a New Guinea politician

Yali's question became the center of Jared Diamond's theory of comparative economic development, which is described in his book, 'Guns, Germs, and Steel'.

Diamond explains, environmental differences lead to different institutions, but it is institutions, such as "complex political organization" that are responsible for technological change and the pattern of world history that we observe. He describes that the cause of inequalities in economic development is in fact due to geographic variations that made certain regions prosper in agriculture than others. He mentions cultural (beliefs / government) or racial superiority were not the reason that made Europeans to dominate the world for a long time. (J. Diamond, 1997).

According to Diamond, Geography was the reason for contrast between regions such as **Papua New Guinea** and **Europe**. "It is all mattered where geography left you". During early human civilization, a region known as **Fertile Crescent** in Middle East thrived because geography facilitated them with 'the best crops, 'animals' and 'fertile land'. Such advantages provided surpluses and surpluses allowed them exchange or develop tools to make them even more products. The practices of the farming societies in the Fertile Crescent in Middle East are easily transferred west to Europe. But evidently, we can see that since people overused the land of Fertile Crescent, the Middle East is doing poorly. However, Europeans used their geographic advantage to conquer more.

According to Diamond, countries in tropics are in disadvantage, hence living conditions are worse and economic developments are harder. But on the contrary to Diamond's theory, we can see for instance **Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan** got tropical diseases and public health was their biggest disadvantage, but they could overcome tropical problems and economically thrive.

While there are a number of examples supporting Diamond's theory – like 'landlocked' countries (Mongolia/Uzbekistan) have worse economies or countries with low GDP tend to be tropical, in contrast we can see **Nigeria** has good natural resources, but the corruption there is hurting he economic

developments. *If we consider Diamond's theory, and ignore the role of government and beliefs, then Nigeria should have been one of the most prosper countries in the continent, but that is not the case.*

In my view, geography doesn't mean environmental determinism, and poor countries are not destined to stay poor to die. Education, know-how or knowledge are the key. Once we know the causality of being poor, we can apply knowledge to change the situation. Inequality and poverty are something we can do about.

Ref:

J. Diamond, 1997. Guns, germs, and steel the fates of human societies, Norton & Co, NY