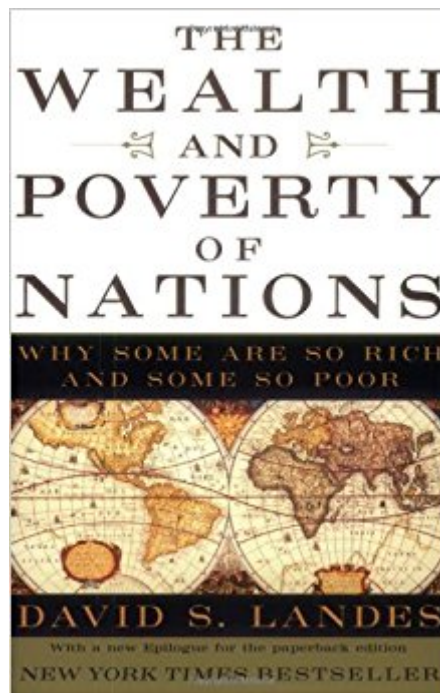


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# The Wealth And Poverty Of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich And Some So Poor



## Synopsis

"Readers cannot but be provoked and stimulated by this splendidly iconoclastic and refreshing book." — Andrew Porter, New York Times Book Review

The *Wealth and Poverty of Nations* is David S. Landes's acclaimed, best-selling exploration of one of the most contentious and hotly debated questions of our time: Why do some nations achieve economic success while others remain mired in poverty? The answer, as Landes definitively illustrates, is a complex interplay of cultural mores and historical circumstance. Rich with anecdotal evidence, piercing analysis, and a truly astonishing range of erudition, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* is a "picture of enormous sweep and brilliant insight" (Kenneth Arrow) as well as one of the most audaciously ambitious works of history in decades. For the paperback edition, Landes has written a new epilogue, in which he takes account of Asian financial crises and the international tension between overconfidence and reality. Maps

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Professor David S. Landes takes a historic approach to the analysis of the distribution of wealth in this landmark study of world economics. Landes argues that the key to today's disparity between the rich and poor nations of the world stems directly from the industrial revolution, in which some countries made the leap to industrialization and became fabulously rich, while other countries failed to adapt and remained poor. Why some countries were able to industrialize and others weren't has been the subject of much heated debate over the decades; climate, natural resources, and geography have all been put forward as explanations--and are all brushed aside by Landes in favor

of his own controversial theory: that the ability to effect an industrial revolution is dependent on certain cultural traits, without which industrialization is impossible to sustain. Landes contrasts the characteristics of successfully industrialized nations--work, thrift, honesty, patience, and tenacity--with those of nonindustrial countries, arguing that until these values are internalized by all nations, the gulf between the rich and poor will continue to grow. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Landes (Revolution in Time), Harvard professor emeritus of history, undertakes an economic and cultural history of the world during the past five centuries. His well-written, sometimes witty analysis is the kind of work one wants to pause over and reflect upon at each chapter before moving ahead. Landes's principal argument is that the richest nations continue to prosper while poorer nations lag behind because of their relative ability or inability to exploit science, technology and economic opportunity. In every case?from ancient China to modern Japan?he maintains this is largely the result of national attitudes about a myriad of cultural factors. Landes traces the story of England's industrial revolution and America's system of mass production as indicators of the West's superiority over the rest of the world. Some of his historical illustrations are thought-provoking: for example, the importance of air conditioning to the development of the New South in the U.S. and the impact of a lifetime of eating with chopsticks on the manual dexterity of Asia's microprocessing workers. Most of all, Landes stresses the importance of cultural values, such as a predisposition for hard work, open-mindedness and a commitment to democracy, in determining a nation's course toward wealth and power. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I used this book in a class at my college. As a Computer Engineering major it's not always easy to dig into a long humanities book, but Landes's points are extremely interesting and tell the history of how Nation's came to be powerful or not based on a variety of factors. A great read overall!

This book has been read by millions and reviewed by hundreds. I don't think I can add much more. It's an intriguing premise and Author Landes's conclusions are well supported. Anyone who has traveled around the world will see this for him or her self. The book is written in a plain English clear style - any layman can get the message from what would otherwise be a lesson in macro economics.

Very easy to follow. A good explanation of the cultural, resource and geographic reasons for relative wealth between nations.

The problem some readers may have is that the author gives an unvarnished, no holes barred, tell it like it is, narrative. Many individuals, as well as nation states want to blame everyone but themselves for short comings. The author pulls no punches. He does gore a lot of sacred cows (not only in India) and that always stirs controversy. But that's what made this book so valuable. The only part I might disagree with is the implied generalization that some groups of immigrants to the United States do well because of their home land's culture. Those that come to this country are a sub-set, a non-representative group that is NOT a cross section of their home population. e.g., the British and other settlers to the New World. They are a select group of either entrepreneurs, risk takers, or else the desperate. They are the ones that either are looking to make a killing or else have nothing to lose and take risk and make it big or else fail trying and try again. It is worth the price of admission just for the bibliography and footnotes as well as his humor and cynicism. Again a great read!!!

This is a brilliant book. I read it some time ago and still love it. So many things in everyday life and so many origins of nowadays issues of nations become obvious after one reads this book. This time I've got two items to make a present to friends. And they already reported that they love it as well.

If I were fully to express my admiration for this book, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor*, this review would run on endlessly for pages and pages, acres and acres. I read the book from cover to cover; then, as soon as I got to the end, I went back to the beginning and chewed through it a second time. My teen-age son, seeing all the marginal notes, wondered what I was up to, and his twin sister asked if I were studying for a quiz. The author takes you on a spectacular trip all over the world, digging into the birth of industrialism starting with water and wind power, then going into the clocks, files, tools, watches, math, looms and finally bursting forth into the steel making and manufacturing that brought wealth and power to Britain, the west in general and the USA in particular. What was thrilling about all this was the nitty gritty detail he goes into for each exploration, and I could just see him down on his hands and knees looking at the underside of a spinning jenny to see how it worked. Probably tried throwing the shuttle, too, or even making cloth. And when he was standing "inside the womb of the Industrial Revolution," I could actually see the pitted, baked bricks of that abandoned blast furnace, now a tourist museum in

Coalbrookdale. He really gets into things and that's what gives the history its punch. All the lessons can be taken to the abstract precisely because so much of the work is concrete and easy to read, which is probably why a lot of academicians don't like it. Through his powerful lens I see, alas, what we have lost and continue to lose. We seem to be going the way of 16th & 17th C. Spain, buying the goods of others and forgetting how to make anything ourselves. I read smug economists who actually believe we are getting the best of China by trading our green paper money for goods made in China -- while ignoring the fact that when we put Americans out of work they lose their valuable skills, which then go to the Chinese who not only accumulate money but what is even more dangerous they learn our technologies quickly and at no cost to themselves. Can it ever be wise to enrich and arm a large potential enemy? I consider them an enemy not so much because they call themselves Communists, but because their aggressive form of totalitarian capitalism is pure Fascism. This is the state Mussolini had in mind but failed to pull off. This book contains not only lessons but solutions to anyone who wants to see them. It should be required reading for every political candidate from dog catcher to President. I salute the author for a job well done.

Excellent book for those interested in these kinds of studies. Opens up the mind to the realm of world geopolitics.

Basically this book boils down to the fact that culture and geography does play a part in the economic development of a nation, something that may sound obvious to veteran travelers but is ignored or dismissed by a great number of people in the academic and political world (especially that of inter-governmental organizations like the World Bank). But in order to prove his point the author writes a kind of economic history of the world, from the time of nomadic societies to the present, or more precisely, the mid-1990's. At some parts he does go into unnecessary detail, with some entertaining stories at the end of certain chapters, but even then these serve to prove his theory even more, and one feels better off for having learned it. One of the reviewers complained about a problem with Lande's thesis, that it doesn't fit with England's history. It seems like he missed some parts of the book. For nearly an entire chapter (26 - Loss of Leadership) is spent explaining the reasons the UK fell behind. Those basically involve a refusal by the then-stubborn English to change management and production methods. The proof is the English auto industry, which had a hard time leaving its old custom of producing small quantities of hundreds of different models of cars.

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