

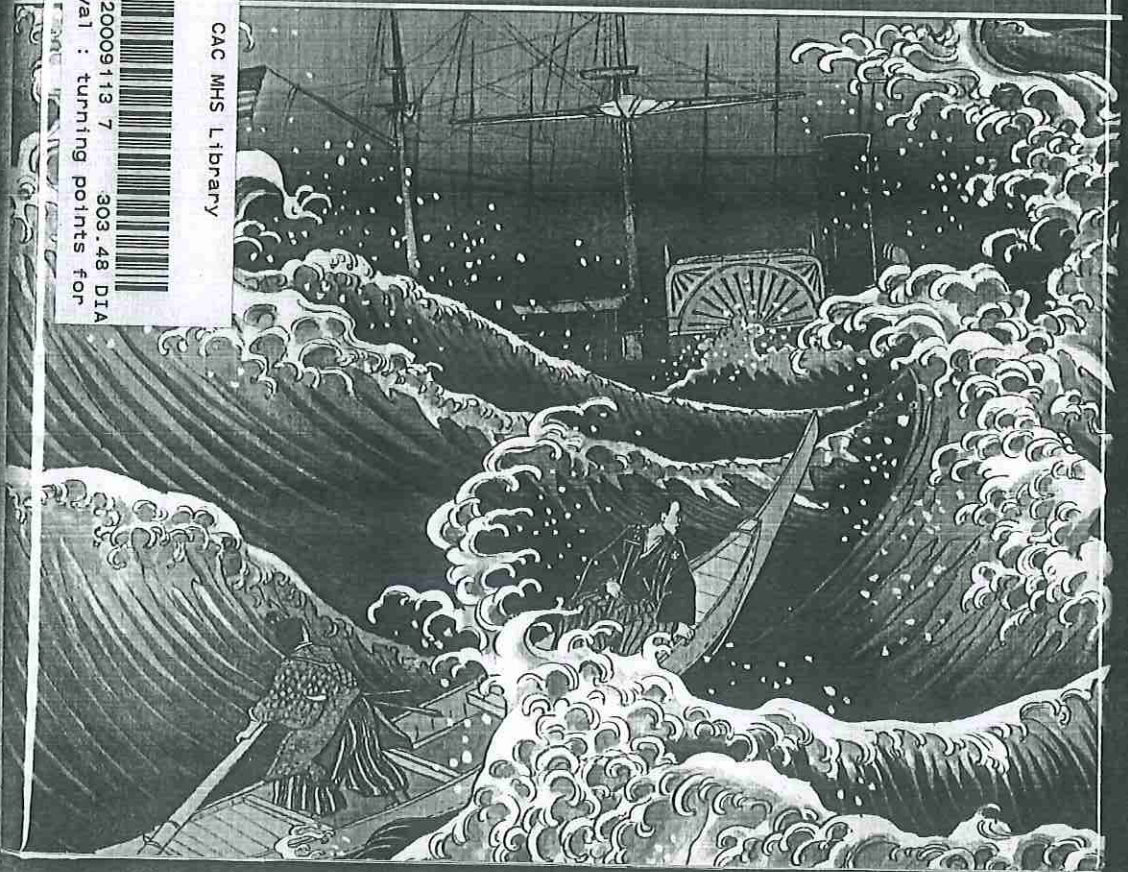
JARED DIAMOND

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of **GUNS, GERMS, AND STEEL** and **COLLAPSE**

UPHEAVAL

TURNING POINTS *for* NATIONS IN CRISIS

...does it again; another rich, original, and fascinating chapter in the human saga—
...sons for our difficult times." —STEVEN PINKER, author of *Enlightenment Now*



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Upheaval : turning points for



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Nations aren't individuals writ large: they differ from individuals in many obvious ways. Why is it nevertheless illuminating to view national crises through the lens of individual crises? What are the advantages of this approach?

One advantage, which I often encounter in discussing national crises with friends and students, is that individual crises are more familiar and understandable to non-historians. Hence the perspective of individual crises makes it easier for lay readers to "relate to" national crises, and to make sense of their complexities.

Another advantage is that study of individual crises has yielded a road-map of a dozen factors that help us to understand the varying outcomes. Those factors provide a useful starting point for devising a corresponding map of factors to understand the varying outcomes of national crises. We shall see that some factors translate straightforwardly from individual crises to national crises. For instance, individuals in crisis often receive help from friends, just as nations in crisis may recruit help from allied nations. Individuals in crisis may model their solutions on ways in which they see other individuals addressing similar crises; nations in crisis may borrow and adapt solutions already devised by other nations facing similar problems. Individuals in crisis may derive self-confidence from having survived previous crises; so do nations.

Those are among the straightforward parallels. But we'll also see that some factors illuminating outcomes of individual crises, while not straightforwardly transferable to national crises, still serve as useful metaphors suggesting factors relevant to national crises. For instance, therapists have found it helpful to define a quality of individuals termed "ego strength." While nations don't have psychological ego strength,

that concept suggests a related concept important for nations, namely, "national identity." Similarly, individuals often find their freedom of choice in resolving a crisis limited by practical constraints, such as child-care responsibilities and job demands. Of course nations aren't limited by child-care responsibilities and job demands. But we'll see that nations do experience limitations on their freedom of choice for other reasons, such as geopolitical constraints and national wealth.

Comparison with individual crises also brings into sharper relief those features of national crises lacking analogues for individual crises. Among those distinctive features, nations have leaders but individuals don't, so questions about the role of leadership arise regularly for national crises but not for personal crises. Among historians, there has been a long and still on-going debate about whether unusual leaders really changed the course of history (often termed the "Great-Man" view of history), or whether history's outcome would have been similar under any other likely leader. (For instance, would World War Two have broken out if a car accident that came close to killing Hitler in 1930 actually had killed him?) Nations have their own political and economic institutions; individuals don't. Resolution of national crises always involves group interactions and decision-making within the nation; but individuals can often make decisions by themselves. National crises may be resolved either by violent revolution (e.g., Chile in 1973) or by peaceful evolution (e.g., Australia after World War Two); but lone individuals don't commit violent revolutions.

Those similarities, metaphors, and differences are why I have found comparisons of national crises and individual crises useful in helping my UCLA students to understand national crises.

Readers and reviewers of a book often gradually discover, as they read, that the book's coverage and approach aren't what they

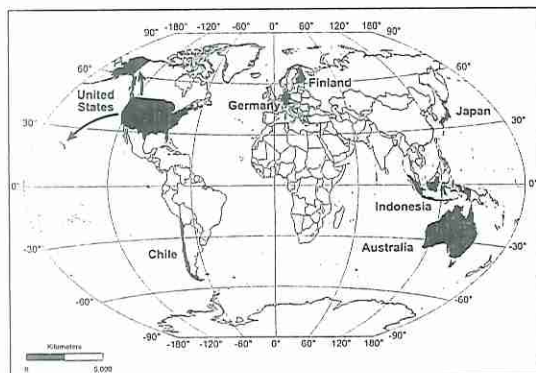


FIG. 1 Map of the World

expected or wanted. What are this book's coverage and approach, and which coverages and approaches do I not include?

This book is: a comparative, narrative, exploratory study of crisis and selective change operating over many decades in seven modern nations, of all of which I have much personal experience, and viewed from the perspective of selective change in personal crises. Those nations are Finland, Japan, Chile, Indonesia, Germany, Australia, and the United States.

Let's consider, one by one, each of these words and phrases.

This is a *comparative* book. It doesn't devote its pages to discussing just one nation. Instead, it divides those pages among seven nations, so that those nations can be compared. Non-fiction authors have to choose between presenting single case studies and comparing multiple cases. Each approach has different advantages and different limitations. In a given length of text, single case studies can of course provide far more detail about that single case, but comparative studies can offer perspectives and detect issues that wouldn't emerge from studying just a single case.

Historical comparisons force one to ask questions that are unlikely to emerge from a case study: why did a certain type of

event produce result R_1 in one country, when it produced a very different result R_2 in another country? For example, one-volume histories of the American Civil War, which I love reading, can devote six pages to the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg, but can't explore why the American Civil War, unlike the Spanish and Finnish Civil Wars, ended with the victors sparing the lives of the defeated. Authors of single case studies often decry comparative studies as oversimplified and superficial, while authors of comparative studies equally often decry single case studies as unable to address broad questions. The latter view is expressed in the quip "Those who study just one country end up understanding no country." This book is a comparative study, with its resulting advantages and limitations.

Because this book divides its pages among seven nations, I'm painfully aware that my account of each nation has to be concise. As I sit at my desk and turn my head, I see behind me, on my study's floor, a dozen piles of books and papers, each up to five feet high, one pile for the material of each chapter. It was agonizing for me to contemplate condensing five vertical feet of material on post-war Germany into one chapter of 11,000 words. So much had to be omitted! But conciseness has its compensations: it helps readers to compare major issues between post-war Germany and other nations, without becoming distracted and overwhelmed by fascinating details, exceptions, if's, and but's. For readers who want to go on to learn more fascinating details, the concluding bibliography of this book lists books and articles devoted to single case studies.

This book's style of presentation is *narrative*: that is, the traditional style of historians, going all the way back to the foundation of history as a discipline developed by the Greek authors Herodotus and Thucydides over 2,400 years ago. "Narrative style" means that arguments are developed by prose reasoning, without equations, tables of numbers, graphs, or statistical tests of significance, and

with only a small number of cases studied. That style may be contrasted with a powerful new quantitative approach in modern social science research, making heavy use of equations, explicit testable hypotheses, tables of data, graphs, and large sample sizes (i.e., many cases studied) that permit statistical tests of significance.

I've learned to appreciate the power of modern quantitative methods. I used them in a statistical study of deforestation on 73 Polynesian islands,¹ in order to reach conclusions that could never have been extracted convincingly from a narrative account of deforestation on a few islands. I also co-edited a book² in which some of my co-authors ingeniously used quantitative methods to resolve questions previously debated endlessly and without resolution by narrative historians: for example, whether Napoleon's military conquests and political upheavals were good or bad for the subsequent economic development of Europe.

I had initially hoped to incorporate modern quantitative methods into this book. I devoted months to that effort, only to reach the conclusion that it would have to remain a task for a separate future project. That's because this book instead had to accomplish the task of identifying, by a narrative study, hypotheses and variables for a subsequent quantitative study to test. My sample of just seven nations is too small for extracting statistically significant conclusions. It will take much further work to "operationalize" my narrative qualitative concepts such as "successful crisis resolution" and "honest self-appraisal": i.e., to translate those verbal concepts into things that can be measured as numbers. Therefore, this book is a narrative *exploration*, which I hope will stimulate quantitative testing.

1 Barry Rolett and Jared Diamond. Environmental predictors of pre-European deforestation on Pacific islands. *Nature* 431: 443–446 (2004).

2 Jared Diamond and James Robinson, eds. *Natural Experiments of History*. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010).

Among the world's more than 210 nations, this book discusses only *seven* familiar to me. I've made repeated visits to all seven. I've lived for extended periods, beginning as long as 70 years ago, in six of them. I speak or formerly spoke the languages of those six. I like and admire all of those nations, happily revisit all of them, have visited all within the last two years, and seriously considered moving permanently to two of them. As a result, I can write sympathetically and knowledgeably about them, on the basis of my own first-hand experiences and those of my long-term friends living there. My and my friends' experiences encompass a sufficiently long period of time for us to have witnessed major changes. Among my seven nations, Japan is the one of which my first-hand experience is more limited, because I don't speak the language and have made only briefer visits extending back in time for only 21 years. In compensation, though, for Japan I have been able to draw on the lifelong experiences of my Japanese relatives by marriage, and of my Japanese friends and students.

Of course, the seven nations that I selected on the basis of those personal experiences aren't a random sample of the world's nations. Five are rich industrialized nations, one is modestly affluent, and only one is a poor developing nation. None is African; two are European, two are Asian, and one each is North American, South American, or Australian. It remains for other authors to test to what extent my conclusions derived from this non-random sample of nations apply to other nations. I accepted that limitation and chose those seven because of what seemed to me the overwhelming advantage of only discussing nations that I understand on the basis of long and intense personal experience, friendships, and (in six cases) familiarity with the language.

This book is almost entirely about *modern* national crises that occurred within my lifetime, permitting me to write from the perspective of my own contemporary experience. The outlier, for