

# Guns germs and steel essay



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Humans have lived on this planet for thousands of years. Over the time, they learned, developed, acquired knowledge, and civilized in the process. Yet, this learning can't be construed to be complete, leaving a lot to be learned. Along the way, human race has evolved by generating vast amounts of food, domestication of plant and animals, along with battles and illnesses. The primitive human who survived on hunting has reformed into modern human as we see today. In the book *Guns Germs and Steel*, author Jarred Diamond visited human history covering over one million years. In nineteen chapters, he explained the human evolution from hunter gatherers to modern humans along with vast food production, plant and animal domestication, battles and illnesses that ruled the Earth. According to Diamond, world advanced from the hunter gatherers to modern humans at different rates and it was all connected to the domestication and food production (or guns, germs and steel).

The world's past is also about societies and how they changed and developed over the time. The entire spectrum of human development and evolution can be understood in relation to developed societies all around the world after reading this paper. The time period that is covered in the book is quite large and starts at around eleven thousand BC and helps show how the world would have been if it started all in the same pace. Food production and animal and plant domestication is emphasized and can be found in the situation that each chapter is in. In many chapters you will also find wars and how men like Francisco Pizarro wasted lots of steel.

Jarred Diamond created a work of scientific based theories and fascinating history that will keep any reader at the edge of their seat. This essay I made

is to show the fascinating history our world has seen from the masterpiece of work created by Jarred Diamond. After reading this paper, I hope you get a complete synopsis of the book and I highly recommend reading this book.

Explore the past and travel through time as you learn about ancient history.

Chapter 1: Up to the Starting Line Everything starts from creation and reproduction. Human evolution started with apes. Around 11000 B. C apes slowly evolved into gorillas, which evolved into chimps and finally into humans. At this point, the new species had evolved into an in between stage and hadn't adapted to what we are now called as proto-humans. The closest proto-human to a regular human was the Homo erectus, a species that dated from 1 to 1. 8 million years ago. About half a million years later, the Homo erectus started to change and obtained larger and rounder skulls known as Homo-sapien. After extensive research on the Homo sapien, the only remains found were stone tools most likely to be from the Clovis Culture- a culture in New Mexico who used stone tools.

Chapter 2: A Natural Experiment of History Two of the oldest civilizations on Earth are the Maoris and the Moriori that lived near east of New Zealand. In Polynesia on November 19th, 1835, five hundred Maori armed with guns, clubs, and axes attacked Moriori settlements, announcing that they were now their slaves. The Moriori people believed in peace and decided to offer a division of their resources in an attempt for unity. Before the offer was discussed, they were attacked and forced to be slaves. Around 1000 A. D, the Maori changed their ways and became part of the Moriori. They colonized at the Chatham Islands and split up in opposite directions. Maori people

developed into more complex and Moriori became less complex in the field of technology and political organizations.

Chapter 3: Collision at Cajamarca An example of a well-known event in history is Francisco Pizarro's conquest over the Incan emperor (Atahualpa) at Cajamarca, Peru. In Collision at Cajamarca, we revisit the most popular European- Native American relations that happened at the time period. On November 16th, 1532 Pizarro led a group of one-hundred and sixty-eight Spanish soldiers to Incan territory. Atahualpa had 80, 000 men in his control, but Pizarro got a hold of the emperor and kept him for ransom for eight months. When the ransom was finally paid, Pizarro killed Atahualpa causing a battle to break out. In the absence of their leader, the Incans were weak, giving Pizarro a chance to call for reinforcements. Pizarro won and made the Incans, slaves for the Spanish as well as made history.

Chapter 4: Farmer Power Many young teenagers get jobs when they're in high school and learn a lot when they start working. In this chapter, Jared Diamond starts by explaining how Native Americans were robbed of their land by white farmers. As a teenager, the author worked for a Native American man named Levi and wondered why white farmers were able to steal land from Native American soldiers ? When the world started, everyone was a hunter gatherer but as time passed, people moved on to food production. Not everyone moved at the same pace and farmers that lived in areas with food production needed more land for it. With no other option, they took land from Native Americans and benefitted by it. More people were fed but it caused the use of guns, germs , and steel which could've been avoided.

Chapter 5: History's Haves and Have-Notes In the previous chapter, food production was investigated and now, food production continues to be addressed. It started at different times in different parts of the world. This was because some societies were not ready to start it. Diamond states that there were some areas that were ecologically ready to start food production but hadn't. These places include Pacific states in the U. S, Southeast and Southwest Australia, and the Cape Region of South Africa. As archeologists traced food production through history, they found that the earliest societies that started it were marginal areas like Iraq, Iran, Mexico, the Andes, parts of China, and Africa's Sahel zone. Diamond wonders why food production came so independently in some areas but not in others. Food production clearly seems to be one of the biggest impacts on the world.

Chapter 6: To Farm or Not to Farm All people started out as hunter-gatherers; so how do you explain the start of food production. This question raises a great deal of thought and may sound like a simple question but the reality of the situation is that (until recent times) food production was more labor than hunting-gathering. Food production used to take more hours of work and more hardships than being a hunter-gatherer. Diamond argues that there are several blunders on how food production started to work. Many societies started food production while they were still hunting-gathering. They never made a clear conscious choice on how to start. This is what threw the world out of balance. Food production was the start of an era of gun germs and steel.

Chapter 7: How to Make an Almond

The next step to growth and changes is plant domestication. All plants started out wild and unable to be domesticated. As time passed, they evolved (just like us) and became more resourceful for humans. Plant domestication made a plant become even more useful than it already is. Jared Diamond quotes in this book that “ Plant domestication may be defined as growing a plant and thereby, consciously or unconsciously, causing it to change genetically from its wild ancestor in ways making it more useful to human consumers” (pg. 114). Domestication changed a lot of plants and turned some to be extinct.

#### Chapter 8: Apples and Indians

In this chapter, Diamond raises earlier question of why plant domestication and food production were not developed in ecologically better areas. The first problem was the local people around those areas and the second, was the wild plants available to them. A majority of the local people didn't want to start food production and domestication until they had a good amount of resources to start. The plants were too wild to be domesticated and only ancient farmers knew how to domesticate them. Food production was an option but these developed ecological areas wouldn't give the more labor and time that food production took. It would be much easier to get food with less physical work like hunting-gathering.

#### Chapter 9: Zebras, Unhappy Marriages, and Anna Karenina

Only fourteen mammal species, were domesticated before the 20th Century. Among these, only five species were widespread and important around the world. This chapter shows us how animals were useful to different societies.

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Many civilizations used small animals for clothing and warmth but never domestication or weaponry. Those animals never had the qualities needed for domestication and had bones too small for any form of weapon. Only five of the ancient fourteen, namely cows, sheep, goats, pigs, and horses stood out because they were the most useful in transportation, domestication, weaponry, and warmth. These animals also played a part in wars, illnesses, and metal (guns, germs, and steel).

### Chapter 10: Spacious Skies and tilted Axis

When we look at a map, one of the first things we see are the axis. In this chapter, Diamond argues that food production is as important as the world's axis. The axis of the continent proves to influence the spread of crops, animals, and other technologies. Food production increased more rapidly in Southwest Asia and beyond, than the Americas. Given this statement, Diamond proves how Eurasia gets an advantage in this situation. Besides its huge variety of domestic-able plants and animals, Eurasia is the largest East West area in any continent. Most of the resources go to Eurasia because of its size and length, . With this uneven spread , many other countries fight for the resources which starts the first part of guns, germs and steel.

### Chapter 11: Lethal Gift of Livestock

There are numerous diseases that swarmed the earth and they all evolved from animals. Diseases have caused pain and suffering to many people in the past and proved to be more deadly and painful than fighting in a war. One example of this is the Black Death which had consumed ninety percent of Europe. Rats scurried across the streets of Europe eating the garbage

which caused an infection in the teeth. This infection spread from rats to humans through carriers (like fleas) and caused widespread infection across Europe. Diamond argues that a disease (back then) was caused because of domestication and food production. When animals are herded and domesticated, no one checked the animal's health. People became ill after eating infected animals according to guns, germs, and steel.

#### Chapter 12: Blueprints and Borrowed Letters

Knowledge is one of the many keys towards power. In this chapter, Diamond states that “ writing marched together with weapons, microbes, and centralized political organization as a modern agent of conquest.” (pg. 215-6). For example, Europeans were able to conquer illiterate societies when they learned to read and write. They found new battle strategies and were able to use science to create new tools like better weapons. Europeans used three basic strategies namely alphabetic, logographic and syllabic for representing a language in written symbols. When these three symbols are put into discovering a way to read and write, civilizations and societies were able to accomplish many tasks. Civilizations wrote down their history to preserve it and also had valuable information written down which cannot be shared with world. Over the time, this knowledge became the source to power.

#### Chapter 13: Necessity's Mother

Many important inventions like firearms, oceangoing vessels, and steel equipment were made by Eurasian people. Why is it that they were able to be the first to invent all this? Many scientists argue that Eurasia had the

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most brains than the rest of the countries around the world. Diamond believes that many new inventions were made because of the population. Due to Eurasia's population and size, an inventor can show his invention and be sure that he/she will be recognized in the society. Around the same time, there was a lot of use of steel for inventions and technology. That brings us to the last part of guns, germs, and steel.

#### Chapter 14: From Egalitarian to Kleptocracy

Some of the best way to characterize a civilization is through government and religion. Government is connected to religion and branched out in different ways around the world. Bands were small groups of people that went up to eighty people and were related by family ties. Tribes were societies who consisted of a large population and were based on kinship. Chiefdom society was a political economy that ran under a chief. Finally, the state society was a society that was organized by the government, socio economic classes, a market economy, and large populations. This was the way one could tell if a society was good and strong or bad and weak.

#### Chapter 15: Yali's People

Yali's People refers to five geographic areas. First area refers to Australia and is considered the most advanced society. Diamond wonders why they didn't take control of Europe or any other part of the world if they were ahead in technology. Scientists think that it was because of racial differences in the country. Diamond theorizes that Australia and New Guinea grew isolated from Asia and areas around it. As they stayed apart from the world, they civilized differently. It was only centuries after A. D 1500 that Australia and

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New Guinea were capable enough to keep more than small bands of tribes in them.

#### Chapter 16: How China became Chinese

China has about 500, 000 years of history, started out very diverse with more than 130 languages, but grew uniform over the years. The different religions which the language originated from split up into four families and became the North and South of China. The North and South were very different from each other and repeatedly thought of engaging in war. North initiated action and took control over the South, thus uniting China into a uniformed country. The North's popular language - "Mandarin" - was enforced on population. Once Mandarin became the dominant language, native speakers were either killed or pressured to learn and use it. Three other languages were pushed off into Southeast Asia. The fourth language was pushed into the Philippines and Polynesia.

#### Chapter 17: Speedboat to Polynesia

The same kind of movement that brought people to Australia and New Guinea had brought people to Polynesia. The move to Polynesia was called the Austronesian Expansion. It was said to be one of the biggest movement in the past 6000 years. Diamond believes that Polynesian people originated from Taiwan and South China and left because of the pressure given to learn the language required there. Thousands of people moved in the Austronesian Expansion and they split, into four sub-families. These families were based on languages, and when they became larger; they started to break apart even more. However, they didn't follow China's example.

Chapter 18: Hemisphere's colliding After the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, the new world (America) and the old world (Europe) developed dependency on each other which had its advantages and disadvantages. However, as America and Europe started import and export of resources, illnesses traveled causing a mass break out and many deaths. The king and queen of Italy allowed him one more expedition to find more land. As he failed to discover new land, Columbus was eventually taken back to Europe in chains. As people started moving into America, it needed lot of assistance from Europeans because of low amount of resources. The two continents relied on each other for a long time and newly discovered land is named America after Amerigo Vespucci.

Chapter 19: How Africa became BlackAfrica started out having five of the six major divisions of mankind. If that is the case, then how did Africans turn into black people? In the last and final chapter of guns germs and steel Diamond concludes the book by answering that question. There was one civilization in Africa that existed in each section of the continent. These people were called the Bantu civilization and they were of dark skin color. Their religion became more and more popular through Africa until almost everyone knew it. As the years passed Africans (Bantu or not) had the same skin color as them.

Conclusion:

History has always kept people wanting to know more. We can always keep wondering and theorizing about how tribes and civilizations lived their lives. We can tell how humans evolved, how Columbus found America, how domestication and production made wars and illnesses happen, etc. Guns

Guns and Steel shows the best and most important parts of the past and proves that a theory can (sometimes) create a puzzle piece to fit the puzzle.

Half of the history we know and learn today is based on theories supported by scientific evidence. In the book Guns Germs and Steel, guns started wars and battles; germs were spread because of domestication and production; and steel caused the domestication and production. Diamond expresses in his book that many wars and illnesses could've been avoided if people had started the food production and domestication at the right place and time. They were the two causes of guns, germs, and steel and still are.

For that reason, wars still continue to be fought and new illnesses rise up like Ebola and H1N1. Guns and Germs brought the use of steel and metal beyond the necessary means and resulted in excessive usage of the same. With Guns Germs and Steel, Diamond also talks about the strengths and weaknesses of the past. If wars and battles continue to be waged as in the past, then it would remain as the most destructive weakness of humans. .

The book provided many examples of guns germs and steel. First of all, as North and South of China fought, people were killed and pressured to learn a new language. For money, Pizarro was seeking money and developed strong enmity with Incans and fought war. People in Europe dumped their garbage on the streets resulting in black death which wiped 90 percent of Europe. All these examples clearly indicate the humans involvement with guns, germs and steel.