

Prof. Jared Diamond – *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*
[reducing 592 pages to one page]

Through a grab bag of case studies that range from the Mayan Empire to modern China, Diamond tries to distill **a unified theory about why societies fail or succeed.**

He identifies **five factors that contribute to collapse:**

- climate change
- hostile neighbors
- trade partners (that is, alternative sources of essential goods)
- environmental problems
- a society's response to its environmental problems

The first four may or may not prove significant in each society's demise, Diamond claims, but the fifth always does. The salient point, of course, is that a society's response to environmental problems is completely within its control, which is not always true of the other factors.

Diamond then identifies the **12 environmental problems that are portents of doom:**

- destruction of natural habitats (mainly through deforestation)
- reduction of wild foods
- loss of biodiversity
- erosion of soil
- depletion of natural resources
- pollution of freshwater
- maximizing of natural photosynthetic resources
- introduction by humans of toxins and alien species
- artificially induced climate change
- overpopulation and its impact