

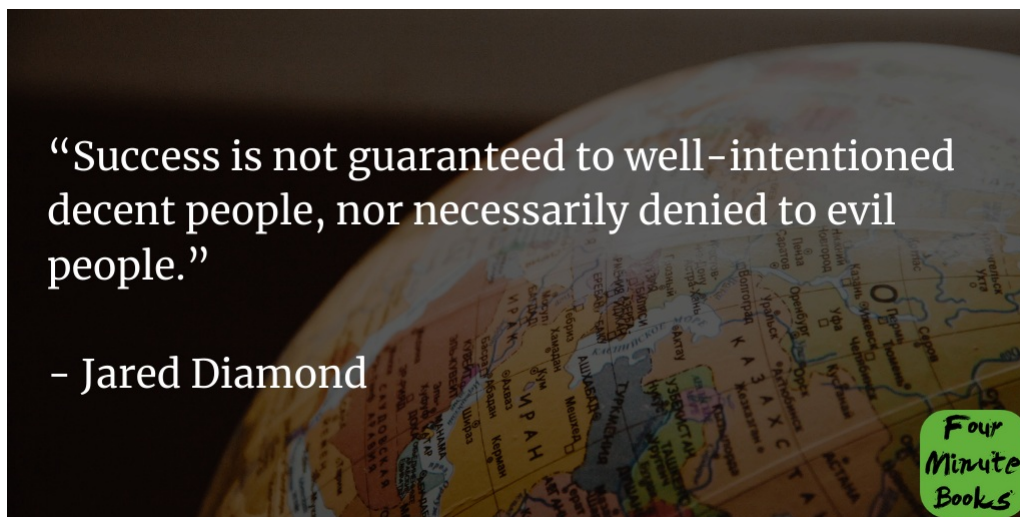
Upheaval Summary



1-Sentence-Summary: *Upheaval* enlightens you by telling the stories of seven countries that fell into crises, including how they got there and what they did to get out, and identifies the common threads between all of them.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



If you've ever been through a tricky situation, you know getting out takes a lot of discipline. The solution usually comes through what's known as selective change. That's when you identify the problem and figure out what needs to change and what doesn't.

Running a country that goes through a crisis requires a similar approach. Whether we examine the crises of Chile and Indonesia in the 1970s or Germany and Australia following WWII, we see similar problems with the solutions found through selective change.

In *Upheaval: Turning Points for Nations in Crisis* by Jared Diamond, we take a fascinating look at seven countries facing crises. It will surprise you to see how similar problems arise in different countries that seem so different from one another. And you'll be enlightened to discover how each of them solved these issues.

Here are the 3 best lessons I got out of this book:

1. Personal, as well as national crises, need selective change and there are 12 factors to examine to come up with a solution.
2. Japan and post-war Germany are good examples of how to adapt and solve crises.
3. The world needs to come together to face the new threats we have today.

Are you excited to discover some important world history and current events? Let's go!

Lesson 1: Both national and personal problems require examination of 12 factors to find a solution.

Those who have reached adulthood have experienced some sort of crisis. Maybe it was an identity crisis of adolescence. Or maybe it was at another time of transition such as mid-life or retirement. They can be sudden or gradual, but whatever it is, it's probably a sign that the way you are approaching life isn't working quite right for you and it's time for a change.

The same thing happens to countries. **Nations find that the way things are going isn't working and there needs to be a change.** An example of this is an estimate that says US cities will have a technology crisis every 12 years. As technology changes, infrastructure and systems that keep the city running quickly become obsolete.

Diamond identifies 12 factors that can help us find a solution, whether it's personal or at a national level:

1. Acknowledging the problem. You can't address a problem if you choose not to see it.
2. Taking responsibility and choosing to respond.
3. Differentiating between what needs to change and what is important enough to your identity that it shouldn't change. This is also known as selective change.
4. Get help from those around you.
5. Look at the way others have responded to similar crises.
6. Recognizing your identity, whether national or personal.
7. Doing an honest self-appraisal.
8. Recognizing and learning from crises you've experienced in the past.
9. Dealing with failure with patience.
10. Having flexibility.
11. Determine core values.
12. Identifying what is making selective change difficult.

Let's look at history now to see how some of these may apply.

Lesson 2: We can look at Japan and Germany for ways to find solutions to tough problems.

Traditionally, Japan held isolationist views. So naturally, in the 1850s when the US came demanding access to ports for trading in the Pacific on their shores, they weren't happy. Many didn't want the deal because there was no benefit to Japan, but others thought it was foolhardy to believe they could continue to be isolated.

This all came to a head when a new leader tried to modernize Japan and open it to foreigners, which led to a coup and a civil war. The war ended in a new leader, which brought in the Meiji era. The new leaders soon realized the other leaders were right: Japan couldn't remain isolated and needed to be modernized to become a respected player on the worldwide stage.

They first acknowledged the problem, then sought out ways to change by having an honest self-assessment. They made selective changes, such as welcoming Western education and building military power, all while keeping much of their tradition. **It happened gradually and took patience, but it prepared them to win their first battle against a Western power when Russia attacked at Tsushima Strait.**

Germany also faced a huge crisis following WWII. Millions were lost, the country was divided, and there was a lot of destruction. They were divided into East and West. The East became the Democratic Republic of Germany, which many saw as a more restrictive government, and they fled to the West. The rest of Europe began to see that the West was no longer a threat, and included them in the Marshall Plan which helped European countries with war recovery.

Then came selective change for West Germany. They made their own currency and joined the free market. Then came a string of reforms to make Germany less authoritarian and to give women more rights. Most impressive of all was that their chancellor Willy Brandt went on a foreign relations trip asking other nations for forgiveness for the War. Through West Germany's flexibility and patience, they were eventually able to reunite the country in 1989.

Lesson 3: The world is facing a variety of threats that can only be solved by working together.

In the book, Diamond gives five other examples of countries that overcame crises in the modern era. It's impressive to see how nations overcome dire circumstances and become prosperous through selective change.

Today, nations have become so intertwined through globalization that Diamond argues it's more important than ever to look at the crises we face as a planet. **Some of these pressing problems are nuclear weapons, depletion of natural resources, climate change, and unequal wealth distribution.**

Increasing CO₂ emissions are causing temperatures to rise globally, causing a myriad of other problems like rising sea levels and killing vital species. Overfishing and deforestation must also be slowed down if we want earth to remain sustainable.

Many of these problems can be at least partially fixed by reducing our consumption. But to do this, we all as people on earth must work together to acknowledge the problem, take responsibility, and make selective changes. This collaboration is the only way we as a world will be able to steer away from the crises we are heading toward.

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Upheaval Review

Upheaval is definitely for those who are interested in politics and history. There are good lessons to take out of it, but your average person might find it to be a bit of a slow read. One great thing that I think it contains is the 12 factors to look at when you have an issue, because these are definitely applicable to everyday life.

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Who would I recommend the Upheaval summary to?

The 62-year-old history buff, the 19-year-old political science major, and anyone that is curious to know more about global affairs.