

Innovation & Imitation for Nations: The Technological Gap Shock and Nations' Urge to Imitate & Copycat

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Innovation & Imitation for Nations is an enlightening history book that reveals Western patterns of technological theft.

Mohammed Ahmad S. Al-Shamsi's illuminating history text *Innovation & Imitation for Nations* suggests that Western technological development often followed in the footsteps of the East.

Split into four parts, this book discusses a variety of technological advances that shaped world economies. Throughout, it places its examples into the proper historical, legal, and social context. It makes a point to list shortcuts taken along the way, from the use of patents allowing the replication of products to the blatant theft of ideas from poorer nations. It shows how commodities including Chinese porcelain and silk and Phoenician textile dyes were co-opted by more powerful countries, skewing the truth of who was responsible for the initial innovations—and doing so with wide and lasting implications.

Taking early care to define its terminology, the book imparts a solid understanding of its economic framework. Once this groundwork is laid, it moves through distinct eras in human history and world geography to showcase how Western infrastructures proved conducive to economic growth through imitation, even as Eastern innovators' economies plateaued. Such arguments are built and strengthened through a bevy of examples that show imitators profiting off of those from poorer nations.

The book's socioeconomic and historical details, including of under lauded inventors and ancient empires, are exacting and accessible, resulting in an absorbing history whose lessons are appealing. Its examples pique interest, as with its story of the development of paper and the printing press, which begins with an account of ancient Egyptian papyrus, and then covers the evolution of this important invention in concise, illuminating terms. Via such enjoyable narrations of innovations, the book makes a convincing case that European nations took repeated advantage of earlier advancements.

Comments on the innate racism of phrases like "developed" and "developing" countries elevate the already attentive text further. But the book's prose is often winding, and some of its sentences are impeded by misplaced prepositions that confuse their ultimate meanings. Further, the book ends without a conclusion to synthesize its major points, weakening its message and resulting in an anticlimactic closure. Still, its thorough index and ample references, the latter of which come at the end of each chapter, bolster its sense of authority.

Innovation & Imitation for Nations is an enlightening technological history book that reveals how Western nations extorted their strong socioeconomic positions in order to steal and adapt inventions from the East.

AIMEE JODOIN (March 31, 2022)

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