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country's leader.China (Chapter 12) suffers from heavy doses of all 12 modern types of environmental problems. Because China is so huge in its economy, population, and area, China's environmental and economic impact is important not only for China's own people but also for the whole world. Australia (Chapter 13) is at the opposite extreme from Montana, as the First World society occupying the most fragile environment and experiencing the most severe environmental problems. As a result, it is also among the countries now considering the most radical restructuring of its society, in order to solve those problems.This book's concluding section (Part Four) extracts practical lessons for us today. Chapter 14 asks the perplexing question arising for every past society that ended up destroying itself, and that will perplex future earthlings if we too end up destroying ourselves: how could a society fail to have seen the dangers that seem so clear to us in retrospect? Can we say that their end was the inhabitants' own fault, or that they were instead tragic victims of insoluble problems? How much past environmental damage was unintentional and imperceptible, and how much was perversely wrought by people acting in full awareness of the consequences? For instance, what were Easter Islanders saying as they cut down the last tree on their island? It turns out that group decision-making can be undone by a whole series of factors, beginning with failure to anticipate or perceive a problem, and proceeding through conflicts of interest that leave some members of the group to pursue goals good for themselves but bad for the rest of the group.Chapter 15 considers the role of modern businesses, some of which are among the most environmentally destructive forces today, while others provide some of the most effective environmental protection. We shall examine why some (but only some) businesses find it in their interests to be protective, and what changes would be necessary before other businesses would find it in their interests to emulate them.Finally, Chapter 16 summarizes the types of environmental dangers facing the modern world, the commonest objections raised against claims of their seriousness, and differences between environmental dangers today and those faced by past societies. A major difference has to do with globalization, which lies at the heart of the strongest reasons both for pessimism and for optimism about our ability to solve our current environmental problems. Globalization makes it impossible for modern societies to collapse in isolation, as did Easter Island and the Greenland Norse in the past. Any society in turmoil today, no matter how remotethink of Somalia and Afghanistan as examplescan cause trouble for prosperous societies on other continents, and is also subject to their influence (whether helpful or destabilizing). For the first time in history, we face the risk of a global decline. But we also are the first to enjoy the opportunity of learning quickly from developments in societies anywhere else in the world today, and from what has unfolded in societies at any time in the past. That's why I wrote this book. In everyday language, Professor Diamond writes of the ecological collapse and subsequent decline of past societies. From the ravage of Australia by rabbits to the inability of the Mayas to supply their armies with food, we learn from the historical record how the misunderstanding and abuse of natural resources have destroyed cultures and made places on Earth uninhabitable. In a firm and raspy voice, Christopher Murney keeps a comfortable pace and doesn't stumble on a single word from the rich vocabulary. By finding the right tonal balance between being informative and entertaining, he renders a stimulating performance of science with a vital lesson for our future. J.A.H. AudioFile 2005, Portland, Maine-- Copyright AudioFile, Portland, Maine O que mais assustador do que o espectro do colapso de uma civilizao? Os restos dos templos abandonados de Angkor Wat, no territrio do Camboja, das cidades maias tomadas pela selva ou a viglia sombria das esttuas da ilha de Pscoa? A imagem dessas runas sugerem a pergunta: Ser que isso tambm no pode acontecer conosco? Em Colapso, Diamond analisa a outra face da moeda: o que fez com que algumas das grandes civilizaes do passado entrassem em colapso e o que podemos extrair disso. Assim como em sua obra anterior, Armas, germes e ao, Diamond tece uma tese global abrangente atravs de uma srie de fascinantes narrativas histrico-culturais. Abordando desde a cultura da Polinsia pr-histrica na ilha de Pscoa s outrora florescentes civilizaes nativo-americanas dos anasazis e maias, o autor analisa as causas da decadncia da colnia viking medieval na Groenlndia e chega ao mundo moderno. Com isso, traa um panorama catastrfico e mostra o que acontece quando desperdiçamos nossos recursos, ignoramos os sinais de nosso meio ambiente, quando nos reproduzimos rpido demais ou cortamos rvoreas em excesso. Danos ambientais, mudanas climticas, rpido crescimento populacional, parceiros comerciais instveis e presses de inimigos foram fatores na queda de algumas sociedades, contudo outras sociedades encontraram solues para esses mesmos problemas e subsistiram. O que torna um ambiente mais frgil que outro? Por que algumas sociedades, e no outras, incorrem na autodestrui? Problemas similares nos ameaam hoje e j acarretaram desastres em Ruanda e no Haiti; enquanto China e Austrlia tentam responder aos desafios de modo inovador. Apesar da aparentemente inesgotvel riqueza de nossa sociedade e poder poltico incomparvel, sinais de alerta comeam a emergir em reas ecologicamente saudveis, como nos vales de Montana, nos Estados Unidos. Que escolhas econmicas, sociais e polticas ainda podemos fazer para no termos o mesmo fim? De amplo escopo, claro e veemente no estilo, Colapso destina-se a ocupar seu lugar como um dos livros essenciais de nosso tempo, levantando a urgente questo: O que podemos fazer para evitar a destruio de nosso mundo?

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