

RACE, CLIMATE, AND INTELLIGENCE

Race Differences in Intelligence

An Evolutionary Analysis

Richard Lynn

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Reviewed by Leslie Jones

The idea that it was climate that determined the capacity (or incapacity) of the different races to initiate high civilization has deep roots in Western thought. In the nineteenth century, this notion was reinvigorated by Darwinism. The Social Darwinists regarded racial inheritance as the result of past training in a particular environment. They believed that man's intellectual and moral development was strictly regulated by climate. *Race Differences in Intelligence* is a reversion to this mode of thinking.

The germ of Professor Lynn's new book is two seminal articles that appeared in *Mankind Quarterly* in 1991. In the second paper, entitled "The Evolution of Racial Differences in Intelligence," Lynn proposed a striking explanation of the ethnic IQ differences documented in the preceding paper. This theory is reaffirmed in *Race Differences in Intelligence*.

Why are the East Asians (median IQ, 105) and the Europeans (median IQ, 99) more intelligent on average than other races? This finding applies not only to indigenous East Asians and indigenous Europeans but also to their offshoots in many other countries. And why do Korean children adopted by Belgian families still have the distinctive lower verbal, higher visualization pattern of abilities that is typical of East Asians generally?

Lynn's answer to the first question is that in the northern latitudes the ancestors of these peoples were presented with certain unique challenges, in particular the problem of obtaining food and shelter in the winter. The temperate and cold climates thereby exerted a severe selective pressure for intelligence, leading to an increase in brain size in the European and East Asian populations. Lynn infers that the ancestral Europeans, but even more so the East Asians, would have been subjected to extreme cold stress leading to more frequent genetic mutations, including mutations for higher intelligence.

The author agrees with Edward M. Miller that in cold climates in the hunter-gatherer era, females and their children would have been dependent on male (paternal) provisioning since women are poor hunters. In such circumstances, intelligence would have been important in choosing mates, and this also presumably exerted an additional selection pressure for its enhancement.

The East Asians have particularly strong visualization abilities compared to Europeans, in Lynn's view, because these abilities were once useful for hunting and navigation in a featureless, snowbound terrain.

On ranking his ten races according to the severity of winter temperatures in their native regions, Lynn discerns a general correspondence between coldest winter monthly temperatures and average brain size. Although there are populations with high IQ in the tropics, notably in Singapore, Professor Lynn does not accept that this fact contradicts his theory. As he pointed out in *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* (joint author Tatu Vanhanen), the Chinese people of Singapore are relatively recent immigrants.

Concerning the evolutionary significance of challenging environments, the Social Darwinists anticipated Lynn's theory. In *Social Evolution* (published in 1894), the sociologist Benjamin Kidd asserted that in the "stern regions" of the north, men had acquired "energy, courage, integrity" in a strenuous conflict with nature. And in *Civilization and Climate* (published in 1915) the geographer Ellsworth Huntington theorized that hard environments stimulated man to discover fire, build shelters, and domesticate animals. In *Mainsprings of Civilization* (1945), Professor Huntington claimed that all of the tropical civilizations, notably those of the Mayas, Incas, and Khmers, were founded by migrants from higher latitudes.

In *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee depicts ease as inimical to civilization and maintains that dynamic peoples inhabit testing environments. He calls the primitive inhabitants of Nyasaland prior to the arrival of the white man the "do-as-you-likes." According to Benjamin Kidd, likewise, "Man, originally a creature of a warm climate... has not attained his highest development where the conditions of existence have been easiest. Witness the contrast between the 'energetic races' of the temperate zone and the 'careless, shiftless, easily satisfied negro...'"

In *Race Differences in Intelligence*, in similar vein, Professor Lynn describes the tropical and subtropical environments inhabited by the Africans during the last 200,000 years as "not strongly cognitively demanding." Because plant foods, eggs, and insects are readily available throughout the year, the Africans did not have to hunt large mammals. They did not therefore need to develop the various skills that hunting large animals requires. Nor did they have to make fire or clothes or store food.

Although Professor Lynn acknowledges the adverse effect on IQ of environmental factors in impoverished Third World countries, especially poor

nutrition, he contends that even allowing for such factors genotypic African IQ is still only approximately 80.

For the Social Darwinists, man's struggle with nature was training for the rivalry of life, in particular for the remorseless struggle between races portrayed by Karl Pearson in "Socialism and Natural Selection" (1894). Richard Lynn contends that in this struggle it is a general principle that "the more intelligent races typically defeat and enslave the less intelligent." In his new book, he cites the example of the enslavement of Pygmies by the Negroid Africans.

From this principle Professor Lynn deduces that the populations with the highest intelligence levels will ultimately achieve world domination. In *Eugenics: A Reassessment* (2001), he envisages a titanic contest for global supremacy between the European and Oriental peoples from which China emerges victorious and establishes a world state; the position of the Europeans will then become comparable to that of the enslaved Pygmies.

In the same work, Lynn emphasized the advantages that China would enjoy in such a contest. First and foremost, China has a highly intelligent population. A nation's IQ, for Lynn, is determined by the racial composition of its population. In his current book Lynn notes that China is one of the six East Asian nations with the highest national IQs. And as he demonstrated in *IQ and the Wealth of Nations*, national IQ is a significant cause of national per capita income and economic growth.

Furthermore, because China is an authoritarian, unitary state, Lynn envisages large scale eugenic programmes to enhance the quality of its population. In the United States, in contrast, it is politically impossible in his view to address the pressing problems of dysgenic reproduction and dysgenic immigration. Finally, China, unlike the United States and certain countries within Europe, has remained a racially homogenous nation which Lynn considers a source of strength in itself.

Richard Lynn is hardly the first commentator to forecast a resurgent China and the decline of the West. Brooks Adams's *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, Charles Henry Pearson's *National Life and Character*, and Oswald Spengler's *Man and Technics* spring to mind.

Is Lynn right? In *Race Differences in Intelligence*, he discusses an anomaly of Chinese history that arguably vitiates his prediction. From around 500 B.C. to the fifteenth century A.D., China was far in advance of Europe in terms of inventiveness in science and technology. But as Charles Murray has demonstrated in *Human Accomplishment*, from 1400 to 1950 high achievement in the arts and sciences was concentrated in Europe. And, superior intelligence notwithstanding, the East Asian peoples generally lagged behind the Europeans as regards economic growth and development until the second half of the twentieth century.

Lynn does not accept that the cultural and economic stagnation of China from the fifteenth century to the middle of the twentieth invalidates his (and

Galton's) theory that nations and races prosper or decline according to their average level of innate ability. He concedes, however, that an intelligent population is necessary but not sufficient for economic and cultural progress. A market economy and political liberty are also essential.

Whereas China in the period in question remained a unitary, authoritarian state, Lynn observes that the rulers of the numerous European states were forced by competition to concede liberties to their peoples, including freedom of thought and economic freedom. As the historian Tzvetan Todorov has recently argued, Europe's *pluralité*, in particular its political fragmentation, was the basis of its intellectual and economic dynamism in modern times (*Le Monde*, March 5-6, 2006).

Lynn also suspects that the underperformance of the Oriental peoples until quite recently had deep psychological roots. Hans Eysenck discerned a connection between creativity and psychoticism. Psychoticism may enable the creative genius to ignore the social disapproval that original ideas can engender. Lynn speculates that the East Asians have evolved a higher degree of social conformity than Europeans. This is expressed in their low level of psychopathic personality, which militated against creative accomplishment and scientific discovery. However, this ingenious argument is hard to square with China's earlier cultural achievement.

As J. Philippe Rushton remarks in a review of this book, Richard Lynn has made some important contributions in the field of intelligence. But he may eventually be remembered as the historian *manqué* who foresaw an omnipotent China and the ruin of his people.

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