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Breakout Nations: In Pursuit Of The Next Economic Miracles

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

• RUCHIR SHARMA •

BREAKOUT NATIONS

In Pursuit of the
Next Economic Miracles



Read by Alex Sklar | Unabridged



Synopsis

After a decade of rapid growth, the world's most celebrated emerging markets are poised to slow down. Which countries will rise to challenge them? To identify the economic stars of the future, we should abandon the habit of extrapolating from the recent past and lumping wildly diverse countries together. We need to remember that sustained economic success is a rare phenomenon. As an era of easy money and easy growth comes to a close, China in particular will cool down. Other major players including Brazil, Russia, and India face their own daunting challenges and inflated expectations. The new "breakout nations" will probably spring from the margins, even from the shadows. Ruchir Sharma, the head of Morgan Stanley's emerging markets division, here identifies which are most likely to leap ahead and why. After two decades spent traveling the globe tracking the progress of developing countries, Sharma has produced a book full of surprises: why overpriced cocktails in Rio are a sign of revival in Detroit; how the threat of the "population bomb" came to be seen as a competitive advantage; how an industrial revolution in Asia is redefining what manufacturing can do for a modern economy; and how the coming shakeout in the big emerging markets could shift the spotlight back to the West, especially American technology and German manufacturing. What emerges is a clear picture of the shifting balance of global economic power and how it plays out for emerging nations and for the West. In a captivating exploration studded with vignettes, Sharma reveals his rules on how to spot economic success stories. Breakout Nations is a rollicking education for anyone looking to understand where the future will happen. Ruchir Sharma is the head of emerging markets at Morgan Stanley and a longtime columnist for Newsweek, the Wall Street Journal, and the Economic Times of India. He lives in New York City.

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Customer Reviews

The average length of time investors hold stocks has been falling from a peak of 16 years in the mid-1960s to under 4 months today. In the 1970s it took \$1 of debt to generate \$1 of U.S. GDP growth; by the last decade it took \$5. Real GDP growth in developed nations is expected to fall this decade to about 2-2.5%. Author Sharma is head of emerging markets at Morgan Stanley and as such spends one week each month visiting other nations looking for the best places to invest. He believes it's no longer possible as in 2003- 2007 to simply bet on rapid growth in any emerging market - those years average 7.2% returns. The amount of funds flowing into those stocks grew 92% between 2000 and 2005, and another 478% between 2005 and 2010. His 'Breakout Nations' provides quick overviews of more than two dozen of the currently most interesting economies for the next decade. His first major conclusion is that China's growth will slow sharply. Total debt as a share of GDP is rising, its cheap labor advantage is rapidly disappearing, its consumers are already strongly participating in its new economy - spending has increased nearly 9%/year for 30 years, and some estimate China already has a 25% share of the world's luxury market, its 'one-child' policy is now bringing an aging population (average age 37 in 2020, vs. 29 in India and 49 in Europe), its highway network is already second only to the U.S., slightly more than half its population is now city-dwelling (691 million), developers have built 'ghost cities' and malls, and its economy is already quite large - the world's second largest. Sharma is even more negative on India.

I read the book on the two legs of a recent transcontinental flight and liked the content, the method and most of the arguments. It is a well written, but not so well edited text. The book claims that China and Taiwan separated at the end of WWII. While the Japanese left China in 1945 the territories did not separate till the end of the civil war in 1949 when Chiang Kai Shek fled the mainland. On the Chapter on India he cites the example of Bihar and uses the term "lawless Biharis" which was not in good taste. While the recent state of affairs in the state has not been good this way to uniformly brush the citizens of a state does not add value to the book or its message. These small mistakes apart there are a couple of underlying themes that I felt are important for anyone considering buying the text. Though the book claims to be looking at the long term returns from different economies and the author's predictions about the same he presents a very narrow view of looking at policies and tools. Let us look at something of relevance to the

American audience. The book claims that in the aftermath of the Great Depression the US followed Hayek's paradigm to let the markets clear out ill resources and return to health and the result was that the US economy doubled in size in the next 20 odd years. While it is true that the government or the Fed intervened very little in the early part of the recession in 1929 the recession did not end till 1933 and by then a few things had happened:1. The Fed intervened and brought more liquidity into the system.2. The dollar was devalued (by almost 75%) essentially creating inflationary expectations in a deflationary economy.3. The New Deal was brought in.

The author of this book, Ruchir Sharma, is head of Emerging Market investment at Morgan Stanley Investment Management. He is a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal and the Economic Times. He spends a week per month in a developing country somewhere on the globe 'kicking its tyres' to get a feel for what is really going on with the economy. This is a man who can be assumed to know his stuff - his essential 'stuff' being: 'is this particular economy likely to flourish and should you consider investing in it?' I am, sadly, not personally seeking an investment home for a few billions of spare cash, but I read the book out of a growing curiosity about what the global economy may come to look like in the relatively near future: about the real likelihood of a decline of the West and the apparently inexorable rise of China and other emerging economies. This book gave me everything I wanted, and more. Sharma's key point is that it is no longer useful or sensible to talk about 'emerging markets' as one investment opportunity: these markets make up nearly 40% of the global economy and about 15% of the value of the world's stock markets and there are highly significant differences between individual economies. Here's the basic plot: a 'breakout nation' (the ones investors might be especially interested in) is one that can exceed, or at least match, the growth rate for its income class.

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