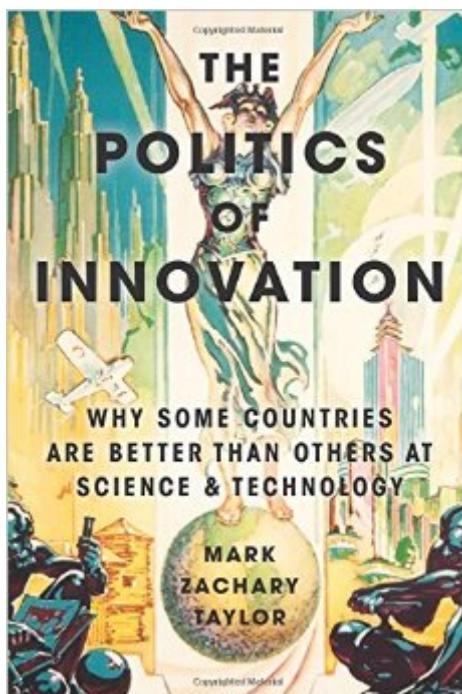


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The Politics Of Innovation: Why Some Countries Are Better Than Others At Science And Technology



Synopsis

Why are some countries better than others at science and technology (S&T)? Written in an approachable style, *The Politics of Innovation* provides readers from all backgrounds and levels of expertise a comprehensive introduction to the debates over national S&T competitiveness. It synthesizes over fifty years of theory and research on national innovation rates, bringing together the current political and economic wisdom, and latest findings, about how nations become S&T leaders. Many experts mistakenly believe that domestic institutions and policies determine national innovation rates. However, after decades of research, there is still no agreement on precisely how this happens, exactly which institutions matter, and little aggregate evidence has been produced to support any particular explanation. Yet, despite these problems, a core faith in a relationship between domestic institutions and national innovation rates remains widely held and little challenged. *The Politics of Innovation* confronts head-on this contradiction between theory, evidence, and the popularity of the institutions-innovation hypothesis. It presents extensive evidence to show that domestic institutions and policies do not determine innovation rates. Instead, it argues that social networks are as important as institutions in determining national innovation rates. *The Politics of Innovation* also introduces a new theory of "creative insecurity" which explains how institutions, policies, and networks are all subservient to politics. It argues that, ultimately, each country's balance of domestic rivalries vs. external threats, and the ensuing political fights, are what drive S&T competitiveness. In making its case, *The Politics of Innovation* draws upon statistical analysis and comparative case studies of the United States, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Turkey, Israel, Russia and a dozen countries across Western Europe.

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Customer Reviews

In *The Politics of Innovation*, American academic Mark Zachary Taylor grapples with the implications of Cardwell's Law which states scientific and technical innovation in any particular country to be a matter of a short, unsustainable burst of creativity. How can policy-makers grow a vibrant, productive science community, creating the patents, inventions and jobs that can drive a high-tech economy? Is it even possible to artificially generate a smart, inventive society? And why is it that some countries just seem to be better at innovation than others? Why is it, for example, in the post-war period, that Japan achieved such leaps and bounds? Why not France, which had better access to markets? Taylor's answer, easily stated but robustly defended in close and detailed arguments, is that nations are prepared to pay the price, deferring comforts and investing in research, if they are in a state of creative insecurity. This requires a country to perceive external threats as more pressing and important than the politics of internal tension. Taylor argues that far too many policy-makers assume that innovation is a black box, into which a state pours money, waiting expectantly by the exit valve for patents and innovation to come tumbling out. As his title implies, politics is a vital consideration in the way that innovation is funded, assessed and implemented, with Taylor offering as one example the old proverb about the four blind men feeling an elephant. All of them are observing quantifiable elements of the animal, but in academic terms, none of them are citing each other. They are ignorant of the discoveries being made elsewhere – their own hang-ups and blind-spots are preventing them from getting to the task in hand, which is understanding the elephant in the room.

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