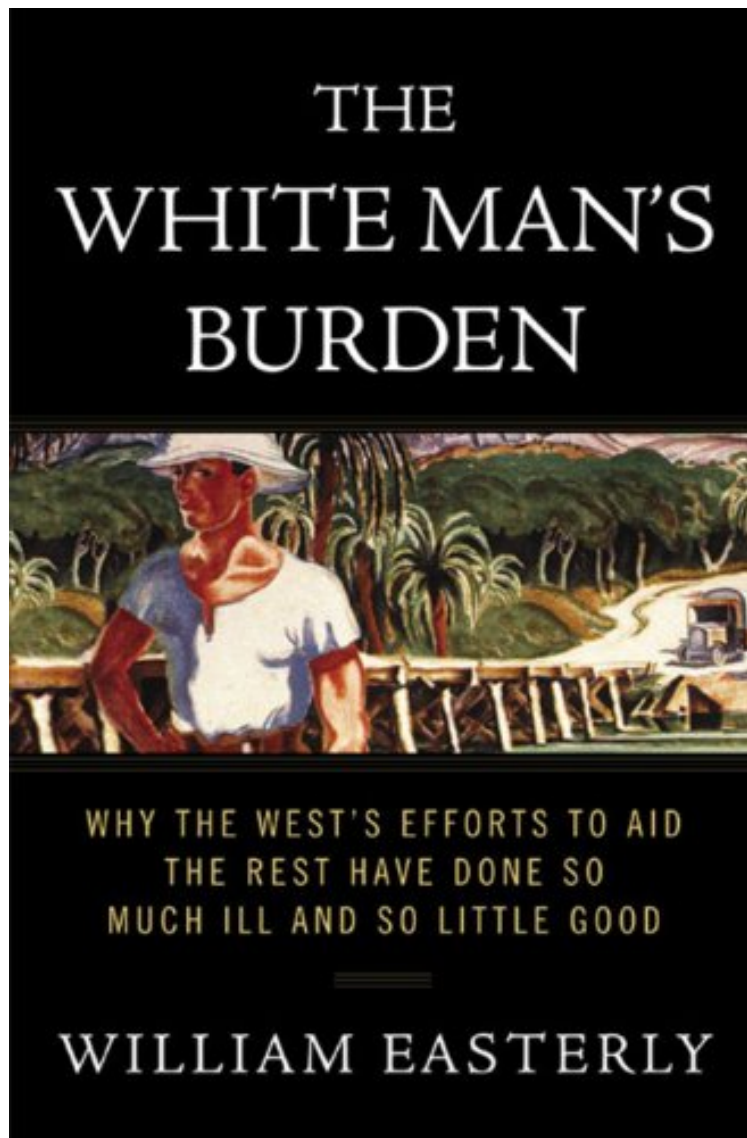


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The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good

William Easterly

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William Easterly : The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. My favorite book on development thus farBy CustomerEasterly

simply points out the fact that nothing will work across the board, and that western interventions based on appeasing the western public and economic interests does not work in all cases. In fact, it hardly works at all. He shows that specialized plans created by those who will be implementing and gaining from them are much more effective than grandiose schemes created "planners." This idea can be directly translated to sustainability where scientists are quickly finding that many different solutions is the real solution. The problem most people find with this is that a) he says things they don't like to hear and b) some claim that he doesn't provide evidence of what would have happened without intervention. BUT he uses many examples such as China and Chile to in fact show this, so clearly these people just haven't finished the book. He really doesn't say anything that can be contradicted as if there really was "one giant plan" to end all plans, it would be discovered from the bottom up, as equally as the top down (which I don't think would be the case at all). My only critique is that he's pretty hostile towards Sachs for an academic work, but I don't care because I think that Sachs is a pompous idiot that's needed to be knocked down a notch for a while. I think that combining Easterly's work with those of Paul Collier and the theory of Amartya Sen would be the ideal combination, but that's just me.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. "idealism, high expectations, disappointing results, cynical backlash" By frumiousI have been a self-described Easterly fangirl since reading his excellent book *The Elusive Quest for Growth*. In that book, he had managed to be precise, supported, readable, humane and funny-- all at the same time. In the world of reading about development economics, this was no mean feat. I had known that this book was out for a while, but had only gotten around to reading it after seeing Easterly here in Amsterdam. He was debating Jan Pronk about what he calls the difference between Planner- and Searcher-based methods of developmental aid. Planners, in his terms, prefer the sweeping top-down approaches to poverty eradication-- all governed by a central committee somewhere else. Searchers adopt a more piecemeal approach to solutions, looking from the bottom up without benefit (or as much benefit) from Utopian ideals. It was a very interesting debate. The audience was full of folks working in various NGOs and developmental organization. It inspired me enough to go ahead and buy *The White Man's Burden*. The arguments that Easterly make feel so intuitively correct that they make me suspicious. The bottom line for him seems to be that real situations are individual, and solutions cannot be extrapolated from overriding principles. He is savage towards the unrealistic thinking of the neo-imperialists and unsparing of many of the political sacred cows. He points out that given limited resources, tradeoffs do have to be made. Too many people forget that even given unlimited funding (which is far from the case), resources can still be scarce-- attention, will power, distribution infrastructure, etc. He also says that if goals in aid programs are failing, then throwing more money at them will not help. I think that Easterly's stand is often misconstrued based on the last point. I have heard detractors say that he is arguing towards limiting aid to the needy poor. There is no substantiation of that-- at least not in his books or in the lecture I attended. Instead, what he argues is that if unrealistic goals and cumbersome structures prevent aid from reaching the poorest, then adding more money on top of the pile will not fix the problem. For any experienced project managers out there, this is going to feel very "right". Easterly is not calling for less spending; he is calling for more sensible spending. He is calling for accountability, practicality, focus and honest evaluation. These are things that should be self-evident, but are apparently very difficult to achieve. He asks the very disturbing question whether the developed countries are more interested in selling their personal ideology in the form of a Utopian vision than they are interested in achieving real change on the ground where it is needed the most. Other topics include examples of successful "Searcher" strategies for bringing change to the life of the poor; historical numbers looking at the effect of aid on growth; a discussion of the different aid agencies and their limitations; and some thinking about the role (or lack of one) in local governments when it comes to development initiatives. *The White Man's Burden* is, as *The Elusive Quest for Growth*, precise, supported, readable, humane and funny. I think that it is in many respects a stronger book as it better integrates the stories of the poor with the structure. There are many fascinating pointers for further reading. I would have appreciated an annotated bibliography instead of just pulling references from the notes, but I guess that you cannot have everything that you want in a single book.

Recommended reading. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good read with many good points By BernardZ Today after spending so much money on foreign aid for so little results, I think its fair that people look at the reasons why? If this book is correct, much of it is fraud. I would like to see some of these people brought in front of the court; they have wasted billions of dollars. I though many of the arguments were carefully thought out and explained. I liked the graphs too. The writer makes some valid points about his Seekers (people who are looking locally for problems) and Planners (people far away with plans) and why the seekers are better. One of these points I could relate too as it happened to me. A road had in front of my work place a big hole, so I rang the council up to get it fixed. They started to work the next day. Now I was thinking where would people in many poor African countries call. Often they cannot as the road builder is far away. Some points I think that might add to the discussion that I think the writer would agree is much of the reasons for the problems with aid though is that the Planners are generally not free agents either. For example, a charity might be able to collect Y dollars for a fever and X dollars for fighting aids in some poor country. Now what is it supposed to do, ignore the X dollars for aids because the Y dollars are better spent. Another example might be the Australian government has a big surplus of wheat now; a Planner could come along and ask for it for a poor country. Okay I admit rice might be better but rice is not on offer here wheat is. Another point I though is

that seekers in poor countries in all likelihood have a similar success rate to businesspeople in the West. Most start-up businesses fail, probably most Seekers do too. One problem I did notice of the book is about 3/4 of the way, he starts going on about what he believes are Western foreign interventions mistakes. I could disagree whether or not the US did intervene in many of these countries a brutalization would still have occurred. In many of these conflicts, the reason for invading had little to do with local but geopolitical reasons often they are not local problems but foreigner and its success/failure must be measured in these terms.

From one of the world's best-known development economists— an excoriating attack on the tragic hubris of the West's efforts to improve the lot of the so-called developing world In his previous book, *The Elusive Quest for Growth*, William Easterly criticized the utter ineffectiveness of Western organizations to mitigate global poverty, and he was promptly fired by his then-employer, the World Bank. *The White Man's Burden* is his widely anticipated counterpunch—a brilliant and blistering indictment of the West's economic policies for the world's poor. Sometimes angry, sometimes irreverent, but always clear-eyed and rigorous, Easterly argues that we in the West need to face our own history of ineptitude and draw the proper conclusions, especially at a time when the question of our ability to transplant Western institutions has become one of the most pressing issues we face.