

# 17 How did the development gap grow?

This unit is about reasons for the differences in development around the world.

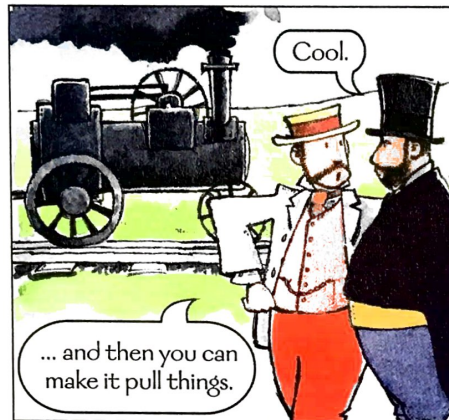
## Some reasons for the development gap

### 1 Historical reasons

2000 years ago, India and China were the world's richest countries. But over the centuries, the pattern changed. Countries in Europe and North America raced ahead. Let's see how that happened.



By 1500 AD, Western Europe had begun to develop fast, thanks to good farmland, a mild climate for farming, and industries such as shipbuilding and textiles.



Then the Industrial Revolution came along. It began around 1750 in Britain and spread to Europe. It led to a leap in wealth and development for several countries.



Europeans had already settled in North America by then. So they started to develop industries too. And soon North America began to grow wealthy.

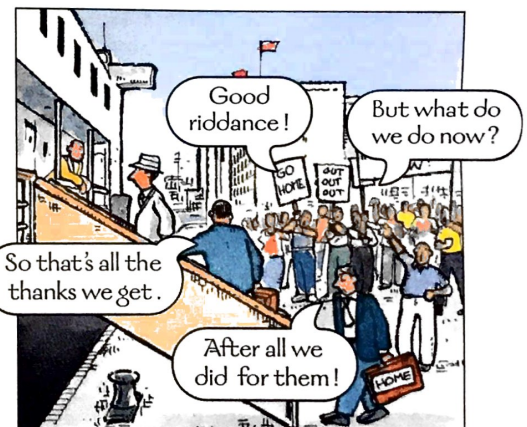
Meanwhile, Europeans had been exploring Africa, South America, and Asia. They had found lands rich in natural resources. Trading soon followed.



It began with friendly trading for things like gold, tobacco, timber, and spices. The Europeans gave goods in exchange. But as time went by they grew greedier, and ...



... took over many of their trading partners by force, as **colonies**. They took their raw materials, and sold them finished goods – and that made many Europeans very rich!



In time, the Europeans were forced out. They left behind them countries with very little industry, low levels of education and skill, and often a great deal of unrest.

Between them, countries like Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal carved up Africa, South America and much of Asia as colonies. Many of their ex-colonies are still poor today – and some are still unstable.



## 2 Geographical reasons

A country's location, and climate, and natural resources, can play a huge part in helping it to develop.



Its coal, oil, gas, and good farmland have all helped the UK to develop. And the sea has been great for fishing, and trading.



But in a hot dry country far from the sea, isolated by mountains, with poor soil and few other resources, development may be very difficult.



Some countries have the opposite problem – good soil, but too much rain, and severe floods. Years of hard work get washed away.

## 3 Social and political reasons



A country has a better chance of developing if it is stable and secure, with a strong government.



But many of the world's poor countries have wars going on, with a big waste of lives, and money.



And in many countries, corrupt leaders have made themselves rich, while their people live in poverty.

## Your turn

- 1 A – I are facts about some different countries. For each, explain why this could have held back development.
  - A It is mountainous and hard to reach.
  - B A tribal war has been going on there for 10 years.
  - C Millions of its people are suffering from AIDS.
  - D It suffers severe flooding almost every year.
  - E It was a British colony for over 50 years.
  - F A small group of people owns most of its wealth.
  - G Others refuse to trade with it, because of its politics.
  - H It has poor soil, and the rains are not dependable.
- 2 Look at the facts in 1. Which of them are:
  - a historical (about things that happened in the past)?
  - b geographical?
  - c to do with society and politics?
- 3 Of all the conditions described in 1, which ones do you think could be put right, or at least improved, to help that country develop? Explain each choice you make.
- 4 The UK is among the world's most developed countries. See if you can give 8 reasons to explain why. (At least 2 geographical, 2 historical, and 2 social/political.)