

“Is Geography Destiny?”

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IS GEOGRAPHY DESTINY?

Why the productive capacity of some nations is so much greater than that of others largely depends on a country's proximity to a coastline. Are landlocked countries "prisoners of geography" [Hausmann, *Foreign Policy*, January 2001, p. 45]?

We define a Coastline Index (hereafter, *C-Index*) which is equal to the length of a country's coastline divided by its total border length (see www.geographyiq.com.) When the estimated 2000 GDP per capita of 176 countries (with a GDP over \$1 billion) is regressed against the *C-Index* and eight regional dummy variables, the coefficient on the *C-Index* is positive and significant at better than the .0001 level.

The mean GDP per capita of countries with a *C-Index* above .75 was greater than that of countries with a smaller *C-Index* in the following regions: Europe ($p = .0088$); South America ($p = .039$); Middle East ($p = .027$); and Central and Southeast Asia ($p = .0037$). For countries in North and Central America, the difference in average GDP per capita of countries with a *C-Index* above and below .50 was significant at the .0006 level. And, in African countries with a *C-Index* above and below .33 the corresponding difference was significant at the .076 level.