why wealth and power becAme GEOGRAPHICALLY distributed as they were 500 yrs ago, rather than in some other way

setting: conditions at circa AD 1500 were the immediate cause of the modern world’s inequalities

* most of Eurasia was site of metal-equipped civilizations, some nearing industrialization
* but the two great Native American empires used stone tools
* much of the rest of the world was still farming tribes or hunter-gatherers

13,000 year before present: nearly all peoples on all continents were still hunter-gatherers, so different rates of human development later took place on different continents

So how did the world get to be the way it was by AD 1500?

Possible explanations:

1. Implicit or explicit assumption of biological differences (thus innate ability) between people-the IQ debate
2. Environmental Determinism: eg. cool climates as stimulants to hard work and inventiveness… but the Northern Europeans contributed nothing of great importance to Eurasian civilization until the last 1000 yrs: they were fortunate to be located in the right region where they could receive advances such as agriculture, metallurgy that developed in warmer parts of Eurasia
3. Differences in geographic conditions/endowments of biological “stock”
4. other

How it began:

Food production often leads to an area of land feeding 10-100x more people than hunting & gathering

-thus ag. populations grew: sheer numbers became military advantage

animal domestication intersects with domestic plants in two ways, both allowing for dramatic population increases:

* manure increases yields
* plowing now possible, new lands opened up (heavy soils and sod now farmable)

denser populations w/ ag. also happened because of more sedentary lifestyle:

* shortened birth interval (H-G typically would only have one child at a time because mother could only carry one)…thus child would need to be walking age before another would be born. Births delayed by prolonged lactation & other means.
* sedentary ag: typical 4 yr. interval of H-G drops to 2 yrs.

-Close contact with animal populations leads to acquisition of infectious diseases (“poxes”, flu, TB, malaria, measles, cholera were of animal origin)

-Denser populations over large areas necessary for persistence of epidemic diseases

-Therefore farmer germs are much worse than hunter-gatherer germs

-The rise of cities and world trade routes were bonanzas for epidemic diseases

Food storage/surplus allows for non-food producing specialists, including artisan and prof. warrior class

Animals also beasts of burden & first transport vehicles of early conquests

But why was Fertile Crescent a key area of early domestication and civilization?

-How did this early domestication lead to later global European advantages?