



TENTH WORLD CONFERENCE
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The Eradication of Hunger

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**Food security, economics and social
sciences**

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The basic facts

- *The world produces enough to feed the entire global population of 7 billion people.*
- *And yet, about 850 millions people suffer from hunger. In some countries, one child in three is underweight (FAO, 2013)*
- *While in the past insufficient agriculture productivity and “Insulation” made difficult to feed the entire world population, now hunger is not the results of scarcity. It is an issue of distribution and re-distribution*
- *It is NOW much more the result of human and social behavior*
- *Economics and human and social forces*



The basic facts

Significant improvements in the last decade

- Extreme poverty (less than \$ 1.25 per day) declining
 - *52% in 1980*
 - *43% in 1990*
 - *34% in 1999*
 - *21% in 2010*
- In Africa mortality under 5 years of age (per 1,000 births) is declining sharply
 - *177 in 1990*
 - *155 in 2000*
 - *98 in 2012*
- African, chinese and other Asian economies are growing rapidly in the last two decades (much more than in the past)
- The recent crisis has not seriously hit developing economies

Global Hunger Index

FIGURE 2.1 CONTRIBUTION OF COMPONENTS TO 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, AND 2013 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX SCORES, BY REGION

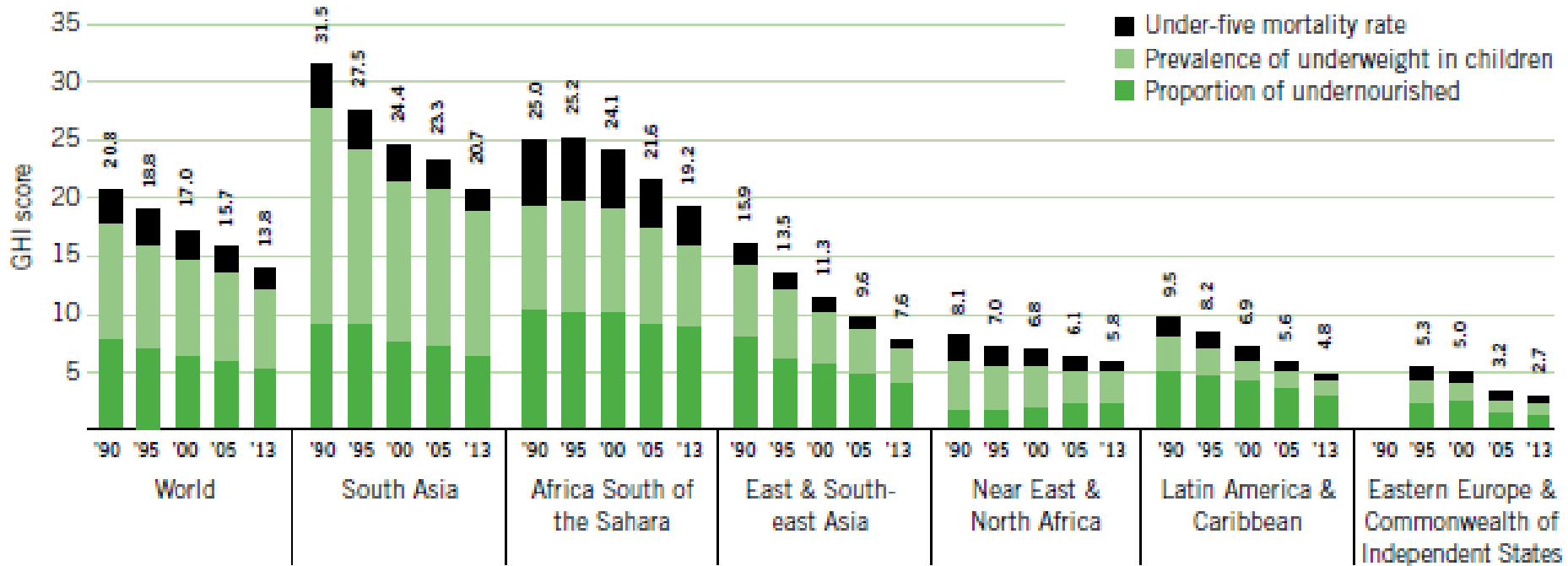
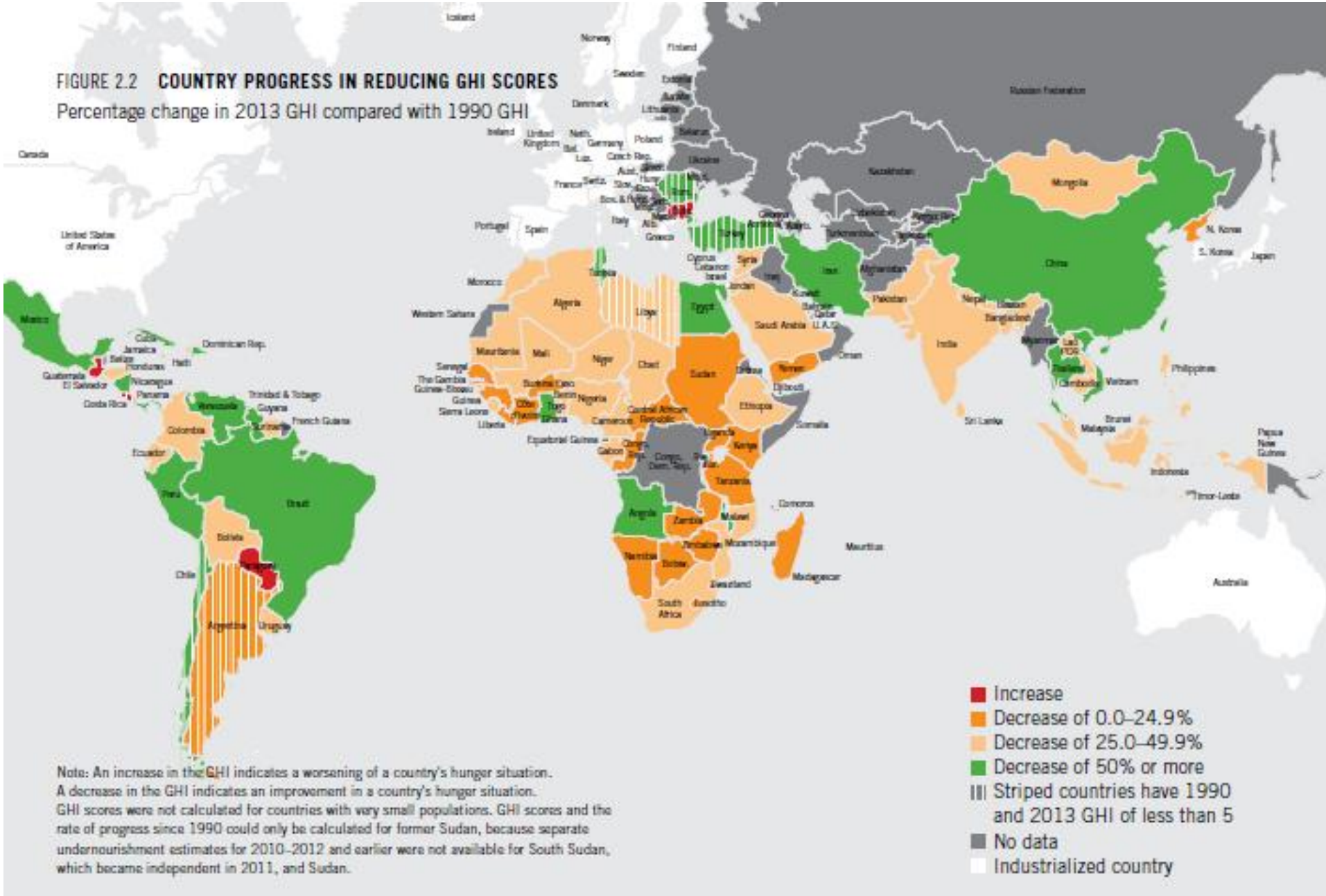


FIGURE 2.2 COUNTRY PROGRESS IN REDUCING GHI SCORES

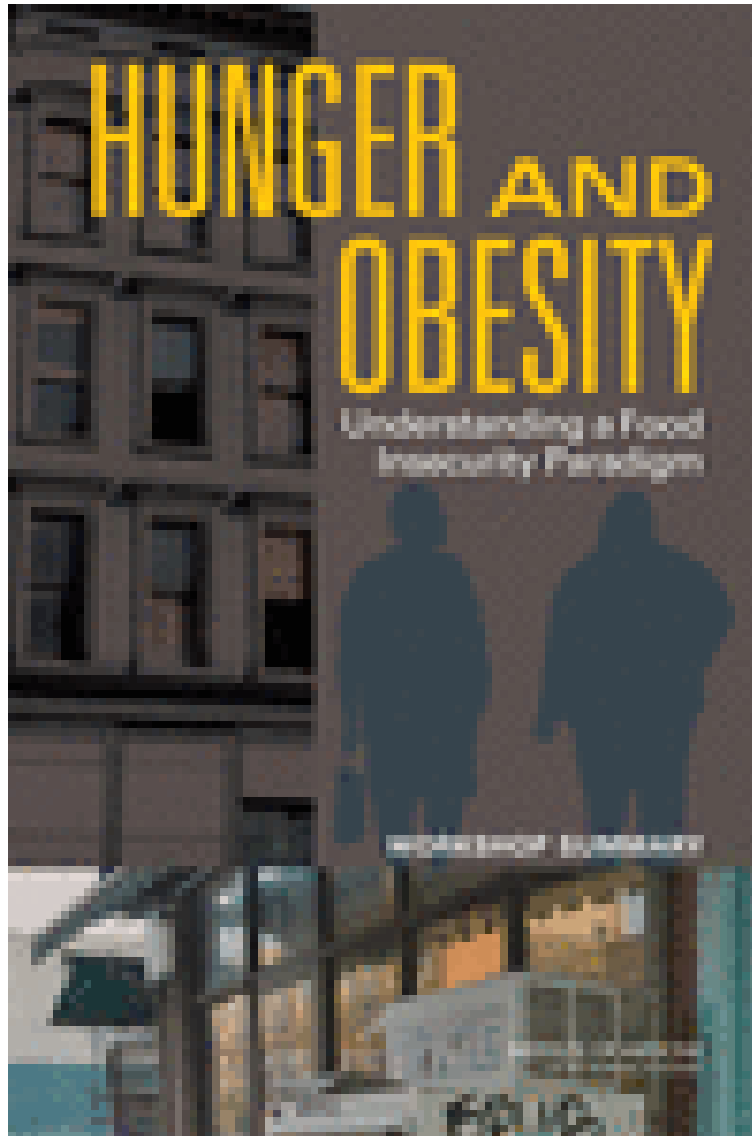
Percentage change in 2013 GHI compared with 1990 GHI





What data suggest!!!

- Human, social and economic forces are now working in the right direction
- Pessimism is not justified by evidence
- Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is possible in 10/15 years (if we increase our commitment)
- Progress, rather than making action less urgent, urges us not to waste time





The conception of Hunger over time (James Vernon, *Hunger a Modern History*, Harvard University Press)

- For millenia: natural condition beyond the government of man
- Most classic “economists” viewed hunger as a necessity
 - Economics (the «dismal» science)
 - Malthus
 - Townsend *hunger* teaches that “decency and civility, obedience and subjection, to the most brutish, the most obstinate, and the most perverse”
- It is only recently (last century) that hunger has become a major concern and fighting hunger a major policy goal
 - Fighting hunger a moral obligation and a necessity («Sen» «capabilities» and «entitlements»)



Hunger as result of social conditions

- Natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, tropical storms and long periods of drought (partly determined by human action inducing climate changes)
- War and displacement (starving enemies, contaminating water, mining disseminating land-mines, destroying infrastructure and social capital, and distracting resources)
- Poverty trap (communities and even entire nations trapped in conditions of extreme poverty)
- Instable markets (volatility of prices, hoarding, speculation)





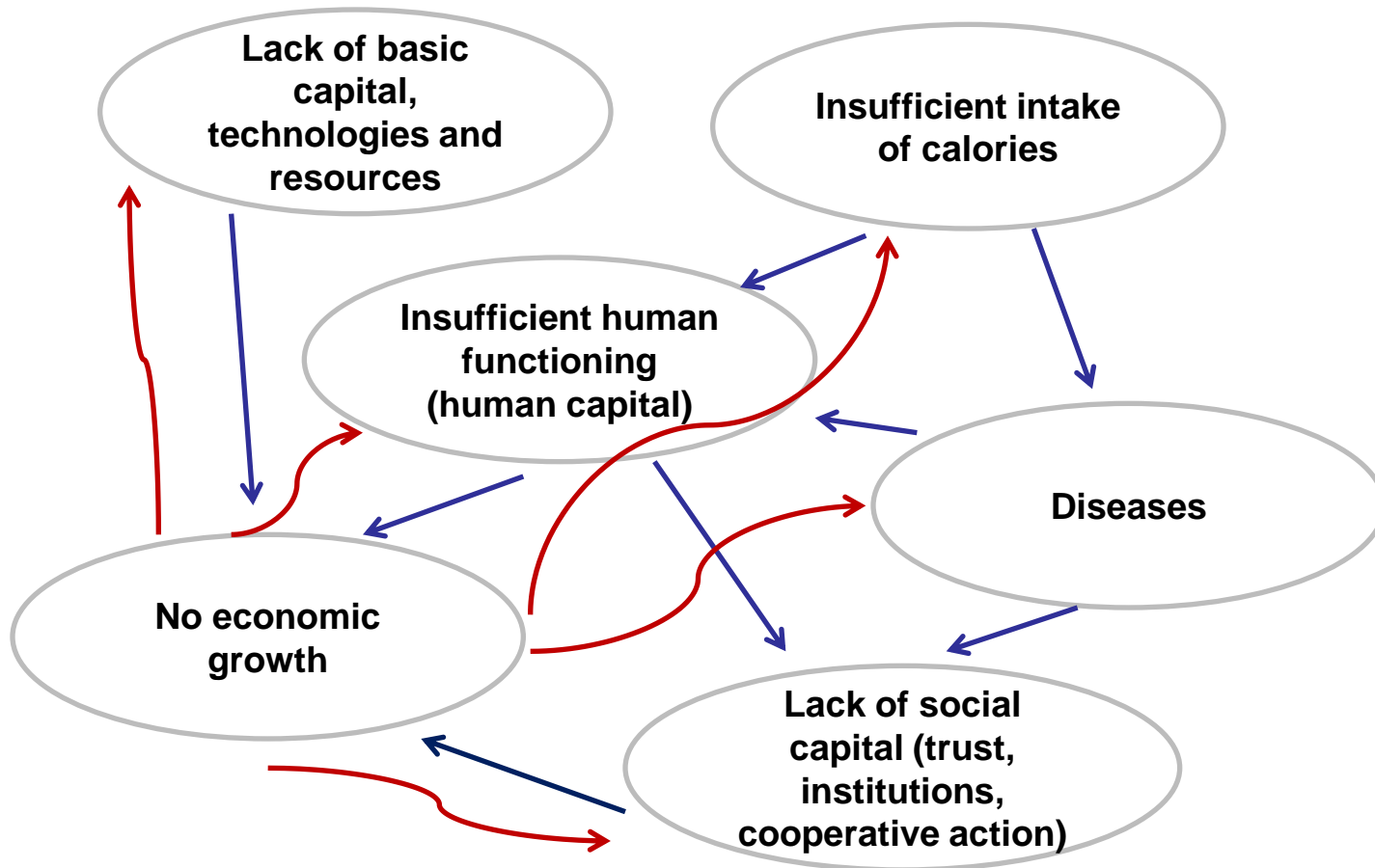
A major rather recent example: famine during “Big Jump” in China (Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*, Haper Collins, 1991)

- Great Leap Forward
- Both environmental conditions and disastrous economic policies created a major famine lasting three years (1958-61)
- Estimated famine victims between 20 and 45 millions
- Jung tells the story from the view of a family of Communists leaders
- Governments often make disastrous choices



Extreme Poverty "Trap" and Hunger

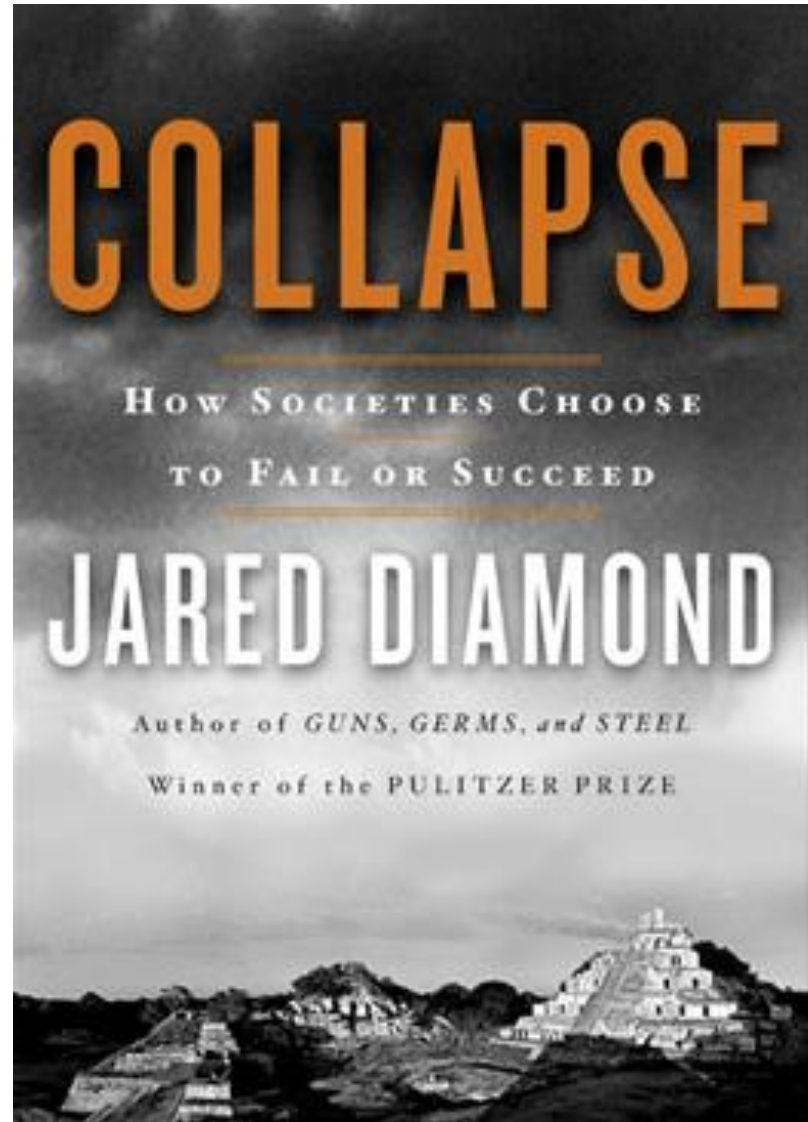
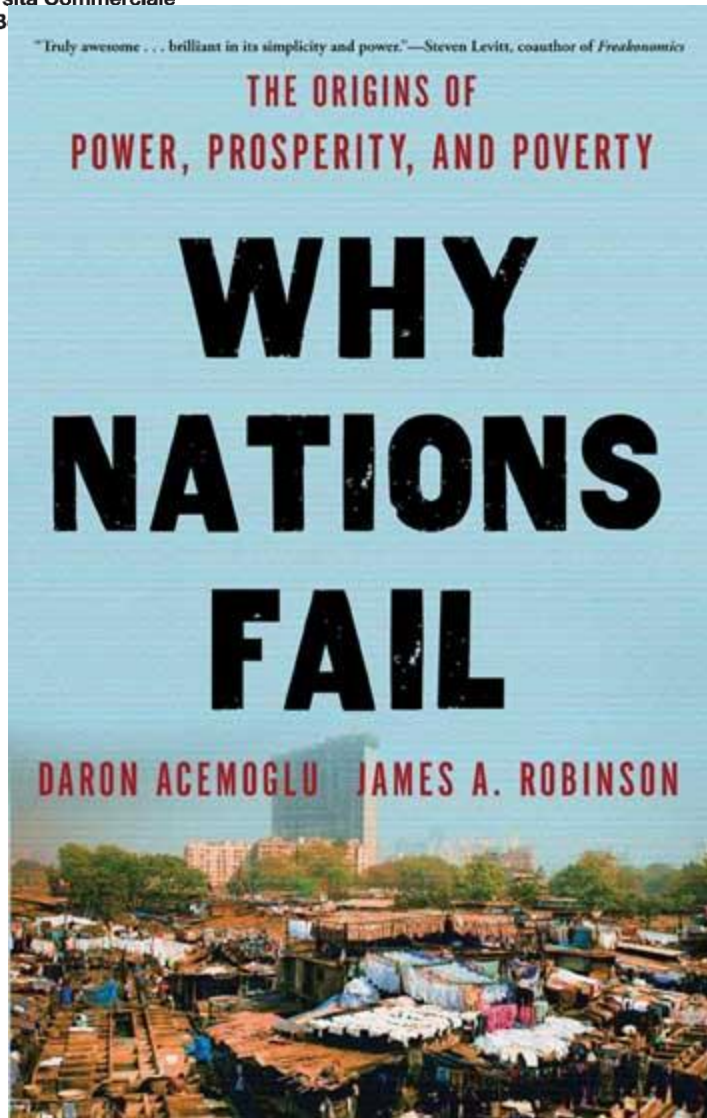
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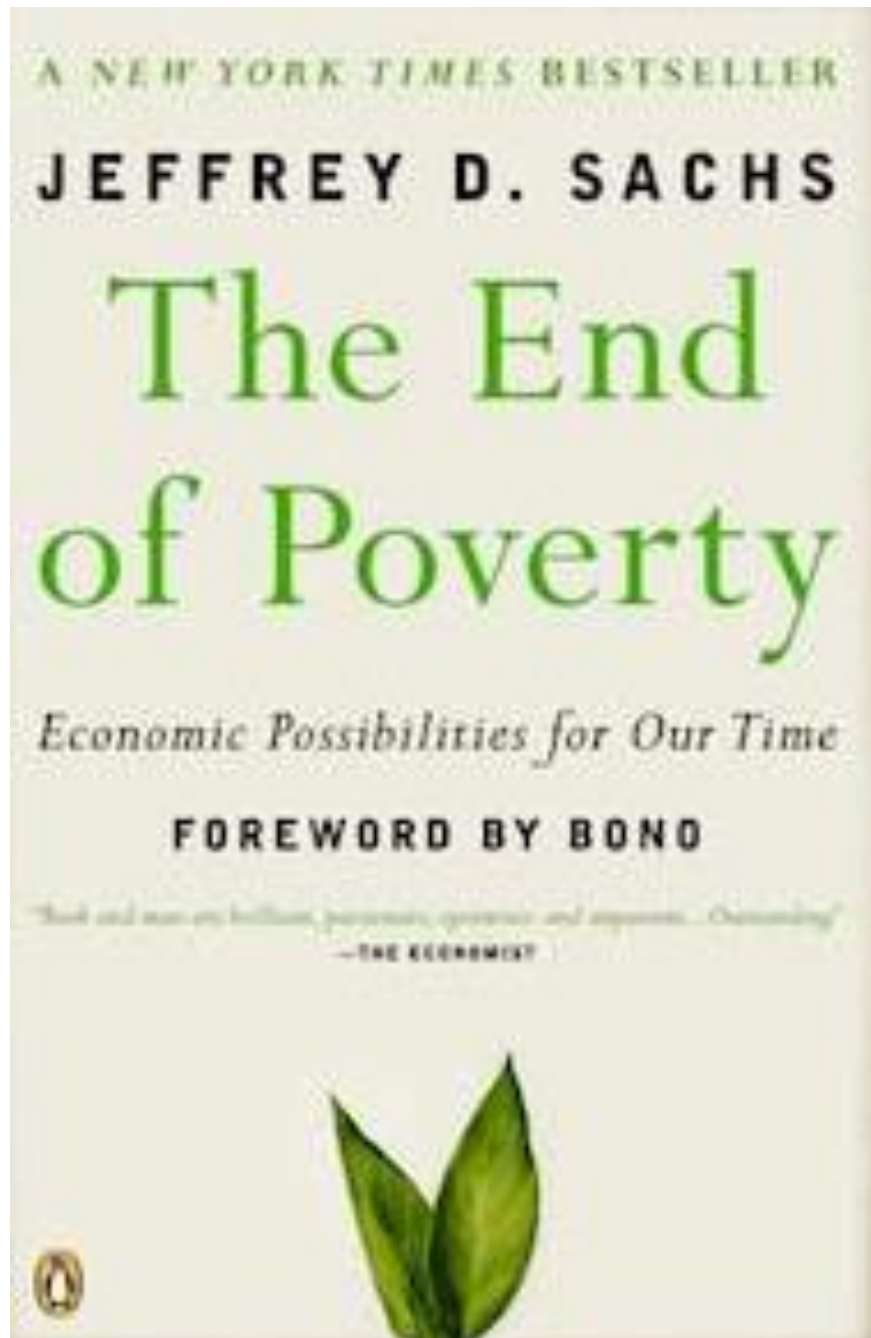




How two exit the poverty trap: The contribution of economic sciences

- Role Savings and accumulation of capital (microfinance)
- Role of investing on women and children
- Role of investing in education and health
- Fertility dynamics
- Uncertain record concerning international aids (but at least impact when crises occur)
- The role of institutions (new stream in the economic literature) (see e.g. D Acemoglu and J Robinson, *Why Nation Fails*; and J Diamond *Collapse*)
- Increase use of experimental designs to create evidence about what works to fight poverty (evidence on specific interventions)
- “Bundling” interventions with an overall strategy addressing simultaneously all main factors trapping communities in poverty (promoting both public institutions and market arrangements)
- Stabilization of markets







Learnings from economic sciences

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- Economic growth of less developed countries essential (but limits to global growth? Is it possible a convergence if wealthy countries grow?)
- Agriculture productivity (Quantity, quality and variety of nutrients)
- Hunger and poverty are the results of inequalities (on a number of dimensions (within and between countries))
- Both markets and state interventions necessary (both of them need to function well)
- The role of the third sector (private non-profit)
- Responsiveness to beneficiaries' expectations and their motivation and behavior



Conclusion

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- Eradicate hunger and extreme poverty is «technically» achievable (we have enough resources) in our generation
- It requires the extension of the benefits of our mixed economies (markets, government interventions and philanthropy) to the poorest parts of the globe
- Commitment of the wealthiest countries (to donate) but also to act to promote the conditions of development of the poorest countries
 - Prevent wars, invest in technologies, tame markets
- Work to create stronger global institutions
- Promote European values of solidarity and social justice
- Invest more on crises (provide means and food to the hungry now)