

I

Why Growth Matters

As I pursue my career as a self-anointed expert on poor countries, the differences in the lives of the poor and the rich supply motivation. We experts don't care about rising gross domestic product for its own sake. We care because it betters the lot of the poor and reduces the proportion of people who are poor. We care because richer people can eat more and buy more medicines for their babies. In this part, I review the evidence on growth and relief from poverty.

When I see another child eating, I watch him, and if he doesn't give me something I think I'm going to die of hunger.

—A ten-year-old child in Gabon, 1997

I am in Lahore, a city of 6 million people in Pakistan, on a World Bank trip as I write this chapter. Last weekend I went with a guide to the village of Gulvera, not far outside Lahore. We entered the village on an impossibly narrow paved road, which the driver drove at top speed except on the frequent occasions that cattle were crossing the road. We continued as the road turned into a dirt track, where there was barely enough space between the village houses for the car. Then the road seemed to dead-end. But although I could not detect any road, the guide pointed out to the driver how he could make a sharp right across an open field, then regain a sort of a road—flat dirt anyway. I hated to think what would happen to these dirt roads in rainy season.

The “road” brought us to the community center for the village, where a number of young and old men were hanging out (no women, on which more in a moment). The village smelled of manure. The men were expecting us and were extremely hospitable, welcoming us in to the brick-and-mortar community center, everyone grasping each of our right hands with their two hands and seating us on some rattan benches. They provided pillows for us to lean on or with which to otherwise make ourselves comfortable. They served us a drink of lassi, a sort of yogurt-milk mixture. The lassi pitcher was thickly covered with flies, but I drank my lassi anyway.

The men said that during the week, they worked all day in the fields, then came to the community center in the evenings to play

cards and talk. The women couldn't come, they said, because they still had work to do in the evenings. Flocks of flies hummed everywhere, and some of the men had open sores on their legs. There was one youngish but dignified man nicknamed Deenu to whom everyone seemed to defer. Most of the men were barefoot, wearing long dusty robes. A crowd of children hung around the entrance watching us—only boys, no girls.

I asked Deenu what the main problems of Gulvera village were. Deenu said they were glad to have gotten electricity just six months before. Imagine getting electricity after generations spent in darkness. They were glad to have a boys' elementary school. However, they still lacked many things: a girls' elementary school, a doctor, drainage or sewerage (everything was dumped into a pool of rancid water outside the community center), telephone connections, paved roads. The poor sanitary conditions and lack of access to medical care in villages like Gulvera may help explain why a hundred out of every thousand babies die before their first birthday in Pakistan.

I asked Deenu if we could see a house. He walked with us over to his brother's house. It was an adobe-walled dirt-floor compound, which had two small rooms where they lived, stalls for the cattle, an outside dung-fired oven built into a wall, piles of cattle dung stacked up to dry, and a hand pump hooked up to a well. Children were everywhere, including a few girls finally, staring curiously at us. Deenu said his brother had seven children. Deenu himself had six brothers and seven sisters. The brothers all lived in the village; the sisters had married into other villages. The women in the household hung back near the two small rooms. We were not introduced to them.

Women's rights have not yet come to rural Pakistan, a fact reflected in some grim statistics: there are 108 men for every 100 women in Pakistan. In rich countries, women slightly outnumber men because of their greater longevity. In Pakistan, there are what Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen called "missing women," reflecting some combination of discrimination against girls in nutrition, medical care, or even female infanticide. Oppression of women sometimes takes an even more violent turn. There was a story in the Lahore newspaper of a brother who had killed his sister to preserve the family honor; he had suspected her of an illicit affair.

Violence in the countryside is widespread in Pakistan, despite the peaceful appearance of Gulvera. Another story in the Lahore paper described a village feud in which one family killed seven members of another family. Bandits and kidnappers prey on travelers in parts of the countryside in Pakistan.

We walked back to the community center, passing a group of boys playing a game, where they threw four walnuts on the ground and then tried to hit one of the walnuts with another one. Deenu asked us if we would like to stay for lunch, but we politely declined (I didn't want to take any of their scarce food), said our good-byes, and drove away. One of the villagers rode away with us, just to have an adventure. He told us that they had arranged for two cooks to prepare our lunch. I felt bad about having declined the lunch invitation.

We drove across the fields to where four brothers had grouped their compounds into a sort of a village and went through the same routine: the men greeting us warmly with two hands and seating us on rattan benches outside. No women were to be seen. The children were even more numerous and uninhibited than in Gulvera; they were mostly boys but this time also a few girls. They crowded around us watching everything we did, frequently breaking into laughter at some unknown faux pas by one of us. The men served us some very good milky sweet tea. I saw a woman peeking out from inside the house, but when I looked in her direction, she pulled back out of sight.

We walked into one of the brothers' compounds. Many women stood at the doors into their rooms, hanging back but watching us. The men showed us a churn that they used to make butter and yogurt. One of the men tried to show us how to use it, but he himself didn't know; this was woman's work. The children nearly passed out from laughing. The men brought us some butter to taste. They said they melted the butter to make ghee—clarified butter—which was an important ingredient in their cooking. They said if you ate a lot of ghee, it made you stronger. Then they gave us some ghee to taste. Most of their food seemed to consist of dairy products.

I asked what problems they faced. They had gotten electricity just one month before. They otherwise had the same unfulfilled needs as Gulvera: no telephone, no running water, no doctor, no sewerage, no roads. This was only a kilometer off the main road just outside Lahore, so we weren't in the middle of nowhere. They were poor,

but these were relatively well-off villagers compared to more remote villages in Pakistan. The road leading to their minivillage was a half-lane track constructed of bricks that they had made themselves.

The majority of people in Pakistan are poor: 85 percent live on less than two dollars a day and 31 percent live in extreme poverty at less than one dollar a day. The majority of the world's people live in poor nations like Pakistan, where people live in isolated poverty even close to a major city. The majority of the world's people live in poor nations where women are oppressed, far too many babies die, and far too many people don't have enough to eat. We care about economic growth for the poor nations because it makes the lives of poor people like those in Gulvera better. Economic growth frees the poor from hunger and disease. Economy-wide GDP growth per capita translates into rising incomes for the poorest of the poor, lifting them out of poverty.

The Deaths of the Innocents

The typical rate of infant mortality in the richest fifth of countries is 4 out of every 1,000 births; in the poorest fifth of countries, it is 200 out of every 1,000 births. Parents in the poorest countries are fifty times more likely than in the richest countries to know grief rather than joy from the birth of a child. Researchers have found that a 10 percent decrease in income is associated with about a 6 percent higher infant mortality rate.¹

The higher rates of babies dying in the poorest countries reflect in part the higher rates of communicable and often easily preventable diseases such as tuberculosis, syphilis, diarrhea, polio, measles, tetanus, meningitis, hepatitis, sleeping sickness, schistosomiasis, river blindness, leprosy, trachoma, intestinal worms, and lower respiratory infections.² At low incomes, disease is more dangerous because of lower medical knowledge, lower nutrition, and lower access to medical care.

Two million children die every year of dehydration from diarrhea.³ Another 2 million children die annually from pertussis, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, and measles.⁴

Three million children die annually from bacterial pneumonia. Overcrowding of housing and indoor wood or cigarette smoke make pneumonia among children more likely. Malnourished children are

also more likely to develop pneumonia than well-fed children.⁵ Bacterial pneumonia can be cured by a five-day course of antibiotics, like cotrimoxazole, that costs about twenty-five cents.⁶

Between 170 million and 400 million children annually are infected with intestinal parasites like hookworm and roundworm, which impair cognition and cause anemia and failure to thrive.⁷

Deficiency of iodine causes goiters—swelling of the thyroid gland at the throat—and lowered mental capacity. About 120,000 children born each year suffer from mental retardation and physical paralysis caused by iodine deficiency. About 10 percent of the world's population, adults and children both, suffer from goiter.⁸

Vitamin A deficiency causes blindness in about half a million children and contributes to the deaths of about 8 million children each year.⁹ It is not independent of the other diseases discussed here; it makes death more likely from diarrhea, measles, and pneumonia.

Medicines that would alleviate these diseases are sometimes surprisingly inexpensive, a fact that UNICEF often uses to dramatize the depths of poverty of these suffering people. Oral rehydration therapy, at a cost of less than ten cents for each dose, can alleviate dehydration.¹⁰ Vaccination against pertussis, polio, diphtheria, measles, and tetanus costs about fifteen dollars per child.¹¹ Vitamin A can be added to diets through processing of salt or sugar or administered directly through vitamin A capsules every six months. Vitamin A capsules cost about two cents each.¹² Iodizing salt supplies, which costs about five cents per affected person per year, alleviates iodine deficiency.¹³ Intestinal parasites can be cured with inexpensive drugs like albendazole and praziquantel.¹⁴

Wealthier and Healthier

Lant Pritchett, from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and Larry Summers, the former U.S. secretary of the treasury, found a strong association between economic growth and changes in infant mortality. They pointed out that a third factor that was unchanging over time for each country, like "culture" or "institutions," could not be explaining the simultaneous change in income and change in infant mortality. Going further, they argued that the rise in income was causing the fall in mortality rather than the other way around. They used a statistical argument that we will see more of later in

this book. They observed some income increases that were probably unrelated to mortality, like income increases due to rises in a country's export prices. They traced through the effect of such an income increase, finding that it still did result in a fall in infant mortality. If an income increase that has nothing to do with mortality changes is still associated with a fall in mortality, this suggests that income increases are causing reduced mortality.

Pritchett and Summers's findings, if we can take them literally, imply huge effects of income growth on the death of children. The deaths of about half a million children in 1990 would have been averted if Africa's growth in the 1980s had been 1.5 percentage points higher.

The Poorest of the Poor

The statistics presented so far are national averages. Behind the averages of even the poorest nation, there is still regional variation. Mali is one of the poorest nations on earth. The countryside along the Niger River around the city of Tombouctou (Timbuktu) is one of the poorest regions in Mali and thus one of the poorest places on earth. At the time of a survey in 1987, over a third of the children under age five had had diarrhea in the preceding two weeks. Very few of them were on simple and cheap oral rehydration therapy. None had been vaccinated for diphtheria, pertussis, or typhoid. Forty-one percent of children born do not live to the age of five, three times the mortality rate in the capital of Bamako and one of the highest child mortality rates ever recorded.¹⁵

As in Tombouctou, there are some regions or peoples at the very bottom of the economic pyramid, despised even by other poor. "In Egypt they were *madfoun*—the buried or buried alive; in Ghana, *ohiabrubro*—the miserably poor, with no work, sick with no one to care for them; in Indonesia, *endek arak tadah*; in Brazil, *miseraveis*—the deprived; in Russia, *bomzhi*—the homeless; in Bangladesh *ghrino gorib*—the despised/hated poor." In Zambia the *balandana sana* or *bapina* were described in these terms: "Lack food, eat once or twice; poor hygiene, flies fall over them, cannot afford school and health costs, lead miserable lives, poor dirty clothing, poor sanitation, access to water, look like made people, live on vegetables and sweet potatoes." In Malawi, the bottom poor were *osaukitsitsa*, "mainly households headed by the aged, the sick, disabled, orphans

and widows." Some were described as *onyentchera*, "the stunted poor, with thin bodies, short stature and thin hairs, bodies that did not shine even after bathing, and who experience frequent illnesses and a severe lack of food."¹⁶

Eating

High mortality in the poorest countries also reflects the continuing problem of hunger. Daily calorie intake is one-third lower in the poorest fifth of countries than in the richest fifth.

A quarter of the poorest countries had famines in the past three decades; none of the richest countries faced a famine. In the poorest nations like Burundi, Madagascar, and Uganda, nearly half of all children under the age of three are abnormally short because of nutritional deficiency.¹⁷

An Indian family housed in a thatched hut seldom "could have two square meals a day. The lunch would be finished munching some sugarcane. Once in a while they would taste 'sattu' (made of flour), pulses [dried beans], potatoes etc. but for occasions only."¹⁸

In Malawi, the poorest families "stay without food for 2-3 days or even the whole week ... and may simply cook vegetables for a meal ... some households literally eat bitter maize bran (*gaga/deya owawa*) and *gmelina* sawdust mixed with a little maize flour especially during the hunger months of January and February."¹⁹

Oppression of the Poor

Poor societies sometimes have some form of debt bondage. To take one example, observers of India report "a vicious cycle of indebtedness in which a debtor may work in a moneylender's house as a servant, on his farm as a laborer. ... The debt may accumulate substantially due to high interest rates, absence due to illness, and expenses incurred for food or accommodations."²⁰

Ethnic minorities are particularly prone to oppression. In Pakistan in 1993, the Bengali community of Rehmanabad in Karachi "had been subject to evictions and bulldozing, and on returning to the settlement and constructing temporary housing of reeds and sacks, have faced on-going harassment by land speculators, the police and political movements."²¹

Poor children are particularly vulnerable to oppression. Forty-two percent of children aged ten to fourteen are workers in the poorest countries. Less than 2 percent of children aged ten to fourteen are workers in the richest countries. Although most countries have laws forbidding child labor, the U.S. State Department classifies many countries as not enforcing these laws. Eighty-eight percent of the poorest countries are in this no-enforcement category; none of the richest countries is.²² For example, we have this story of Pachawak in western Orissa state in India: "Pachawak dropped out of class 3 when one day his teacher caned him severely. Since then he has been working as child labor with a number of rich households. Pachawak's father owns 1.5 acres of land and works as a laborer. His younger brother of 11-years-old also became a bonded laborer when the family had to take a loan for the marriage of the eldest son. The system is closely linked to credit, as many families take loans from landlords, who in lieu of that obligation keep the children as 'kuthia.' Pachawak worked as a cattle grazer from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. and got paid two to four sacks of paddy a year, two meals a day, and one lungi [wrap-around clothing]."

One particularly unsavory kind of child labor is prostitution. In Benin, for example, "the girls have no choice but to prostitute themselves, starting at 14, even at 12. They do it for 50 francs, or just for dinner."²³

Another occupation in which children work in poor countries is particularly dangerous: war. As many as 200,000 child soldiers from the ages of six to sixteen fought wars in poor countries like Myanmar, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Uganda, and Mozambique.²⁴

Women are also vulnerable to oppression in poor countries. Over four-fifths of the richest fifth of countries have social and economic equality for women most of the time, according to the *World Human Rights Guide* by Charles Humana. None of the poorest fifth of countries has social and economic equality for women.²⁵ In Cameroon, "Women in some regions require a husband's, father's, or brother's permission to go out. In addition, a woman's husband or brother has access to her bank accounts, but not vice versa." A 1997 survey in Jamaica found that "in all communities, wife-beating was perceived as a common experience in daily life." In Georgia in the Caucasus, "women confessed that frequent household arguments resulted in being beaten." In Uganda in 1998, when women were asked, "What

kind of work do men in your area do?" they laughed and said, "Eat and sleep then wake up and go drinking again."²⁶

Growth and Poverty

My World Bank colleagues Martin Ravallion and Shaohua Chen collected data on spells of economic growth and changes in poverty covering the years 1981 to 1999. They get their data from national surveys of household income or expenditure. They require that the methodology of the survey be unchanged over the period that they are examining so as to exclude spurious changes due to changing definitions. They found 154 periods of change in 65 developing countries with data that met this requirement.

Ravallion and Chen defined poverty as an absolute concept within each country: the poor were defined as the part of the population that had incomes below \$1 a day at the beginning of each period they were examining. Ravallion and Chen keep this poverty line fixed within each country during the period they analyze. So the question was, How did aggregate economic growth change the share of people below this poverty line?

The answer was quite clear: fast growth went with fast poverty reduction, and overall economic contraction went with increased poverty. Here I summarize Ravallion and Chen's data by dividing the number of episodes into four equally sized groups from the fastest growing to the fastest declining. I compare the change in poverty in countries with the fastest growth to the poverty change in countries with the fastest decline:²⁷

	Percentage change in average incomes per year	Percent change in poverty rate per year
Strong contraction	-9.8	23.9
Moderate contraction	-1.9	1.5
Moderate expansion	1.6	-0.6
Strong expansion	8.2	-6.1

The increases in poverty were extremely acute in the economies with severe economic declines—most of them in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These were economies that declined with the death of the old communist system and kept declining while awaiting the

birth of a new system. Several of these poverty-increasing declines also occurred in Africa. Poverty shot up during severe recessions in Zambia, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire, for example.

Countries with positive income growth had a decline in the proportion of people below the poverty line. The fastest average growth was associated with the fastest poverty reductions. Growth was reaching the poor in Indonesia, for example, which had average income growth of 76 percent from 1984 to 1996. The proportion of Indonesians beneath the poverty line in 1993 was one-quarter of what it was in 1984. (A bad reversal came with Indonesia's crisis over 1997–1999, with average income falling by 12 percent and the poverty rate shooting up 65 percent, again confirming that income and poverty move together.)

All of this in retrospect seems unsurprising. For poverty to get worse with economic growth, the distribution of income would have to get much more unequal as incomes increased. There is no evidence for such disastrous deteriorations in income inequality as income rises. In Ravallion and Chen's data set, for example, measures of inequality show no tendency to get either better or worse with economic growth. If the degree of inequality stays about the same, then income of the poor and the rich must be rising together or falling together.

This is indeed what my World Bank colleagues David Dollar and Aart Kraay have found. A 1 percent increase in average income of the society translates one for one into a 1 percent increase in the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of the population. Again using statistical techniques to isolate direction of causation, they found that an additional one percentage point per capita growth *causes* a 1 percent rise in the poor's incomes.²⁸

There are two ways the poor could become better off: income could be redistributed from the rich to the poor, and the income of both the poor and the rich could rise with overall economic growth. Ravallion and Chen's and Dollar and Kraay's findings suggest that on average, growth has been much more of a lifesaver to the poor than redistribution.

To Begin the Quest

The improvement in hunger, mortality, and poverty as GDP per capita rises over time motivates us on our quest for growth. Poverty

is not just low GDP; it is dying babies, starving children, and oppression of women and the downtrodden. The well-being of the next generation in poor countries depends on whether our quest to make poor countries rich is successful. I think again back to the woman I saw peering out at me from a house in a village in Pakistan. To that unknown woman I dedicate the elusive quest for growth as we economists, from rich countries and from poor countries, trek the tropics trying to make poor countries rich.

Intermezzo: In Search of a River

In 1710, a fifteen-year-old English boy named Thomas Cresap got off a boat at Havre de Grace, Maryland. Thomas was emigrating to America from Yorkshire in northern England.¹

Thomas knew what he wanted in America: some land on a river. Riverside land was fertile for growing crops, and the river provided transportation to get the crops to market. He settled on the Susquehanna River that ran through Havre de Grace.

We next hear of Thomas a decade and a half later. In 1727, when he married Hannah Johnson, he had just defaulted on a debt of nine pounds sterling.² Thomas struggled to support Hannah and their first child, Daniel, born in 1728. Thomas and Hannah experienced early America's health crisis firsthand as two of their children died in infancy.

Trying to escape his debtors, Thomas decided to move. In his next attempt at getting land on a river, he rented some land from George Washington's father on the Virginia side of the Potomac, not far from what is today Washington, D.C., and began building a log cabin. But he was an outsider, and as he was chopping down trees, a posse of armed neighbors suggested he might want to investigate housing opportunities elsewhere. Thomas turned his ax on his attackers, killed a man in the ensuing battle, then went back home to Maryland to pack up for the move to Virginia and tell Hannah about their new neighbors. "For some reason," the record reports, "she refused to go."³

They decided to move to Pennsylvania instead, settling in March 1730 upriver on the Susquehanna near what is now Wrightsville, Pennsylvania. Thomas thought he had finally found his riverside homeplace. But he once again got into trouble with the neighbors in Pennsylvania. Lord Baltimore, the owner of Maryland, and William Penn, the proprietor of Pennsylvania, were disputing the border between their colonies, and Thomas was loyal to what turned out to be the losing side. He got a grant of two hundred acres of Pennsylvania riverfront land from Lord Baltimore, for which he paid two dollars a year. It appeared to be good deal, except that the land turned out not to belong to Baltimore, and the Pennsylvanians resolved to drive off these Marylanders.

In October 1730, two Pennsylvanians ambushed Thomas, hit him on the head, and threw him into the Susquehanna. Thomas somehow managed to swim ashore. He appealed for justice to the nearest Pennsylvania judge, who told him that Marylanders were ineligible for justice from Pennsylvania courts.⁴

A couple of hours after dark on January 29, 1733, a mob of twenty Pennsylvanians surrounded Thomas's house and asked him to surrender so they could hang him. Thomas was inside with several other Maryland loyalists, son Daniel, and Hannah, who was eight months pregnant with Thomas Jr. When the mob broke down the door, Thomas opened fire, wounding one Pennsylvanian. The Pennsylvanians wounded one of the children of the Maryland loyalists. Finally, the Pennsylvanians retreated.

The next battle came a year later, in January 1734, when the sheriff of Lancaster County sent an armed posse to arrest Thomas. The posse again broke down the door, and Thomas again opened fire. One of Thomas's men shot one of the attackers, Knoles Daunt. The Pennsylvanians begged Hannah for a candle to attend to Daunt's wound in the leg. The gentle Hannah said she had rather the wound "had been his heart."⁵ Knoles Daunt later died of his wounds. The posse again failed to capture Thomas.

Finally in November 1736, a new sheriff of Lancaster County decided to resolve the Thomas Cresap problem. At midnight on November 23, the sheriff took a well-armed posse of twenty-four men to serve Thomas with an arrest warrant for the murder of Knoles Daunt. They knocked at the door of the Cresaps'. Inside was the usual assortment of Maryland supporters and the family—Hannah again very pregnant, now with their third child. Thomas asked those peaceable Pennsylvania Quakers what the "Damn'd Quakeing Sons of Bitches" wanted.⁶ They wanted to burn down Thomas's house. The Marylanders fled the burning house, and the Pennsylvanians finally captured Thomas.⁷

They put Thomas in irons and marched him off to jail in Philadelphia (a city Thomas called "one of the prettiest towns in Maryland"), where he spent a year in jail. The guards occasionally took him out for fresh air, like the time they exhibited him to a jeering Philadelphia mob as the "Maryland monster."

Finally Thomas's supporters got the Maryland monster released by petitioning the king in London. Having had enough of Pennsylvania, Thomas loaded his family on a wagon and moved back to Maryland, to the western frontier in what is now Oldtown, Maryland, on the banks of the Potomac. They arrived just in time for Hannah to give birth to their fifth, and last, child, Michael.

Thomas kept quarreling with his neighbors, one of whom noted that "Cresap is a person of hot Resentm't and great Acrimony."⁸ But this time the quarreling stopped short of battle, and Oldtown finally became his home for the rest of his life.⁹ He built his house on a rise overlooking the

Potomac river floodplain, which made for good farmland. Unfortunately this particular riverside property lacked transportation because the Potomac was not navigable until Georgetown, 150 miles downstream. The nonnavigable Potomac was fuel to Thomas's continued transportation obsession.

Thomas in the 1740s participated in a group of land and transportation investors, including the Washington family, who explored the idea of building a canal along the unnavigable parts of the Potomac, but the project ran afoul of the threat of war with the French. The canal would eventually be built early in the next century.

Canals and rivers were in hot demand because colonial roads were often choked by mud, and when they were dry, they were deeply rutted. To cope with the suffering, whiskey was passed around frequently to both driver and passengers during the journey. "The horses," said a passenger gratefully, "were sober."¹⁰

Thwarted by the river, Thomas turned to building his own roads. His road building standards, however, were quite low; his idea of making a road was simply to remove some of the "most difficult obstructions."¹¹ A son of Thomas's old landlords and investment partners, George Washington, passed through in 1747 on a surveying trip. He described the road leading up to Thomas Cresap's as "ye worst road that ever was trod by Man or Beast."¹²

If Thomas thought he had escaped border wars by moving to the remote frontier, he was wrong. He was now in the midst of the biggest war of his life—the war between the French and the English that lasted from 1754 to 1763.

The war started in part because Thomas (and other English settlers) was not satisfied with his riverside land and looked to the west, where there was much more fertile land along the navigable Ohio River. So Thomas joined the Washingtons and other Virginians in an Ohio River land grab known as the Ohio Company, which gave short shrift to the actual owners of the land, the Shawnees and the Mingo. And when the Ohio Company tried to build a trading post and fort at the forks of the Ohio (today's Pittsburgh), they ran smack into another enemy, the French from Quebec, who also wanted to steal the Ohio River land. The French chased away the Ohio Company's local military commander, twenty-one-year-old George Washington, after a brief battle in 1754, which started what became known as the French and Indian War. Thomas and his sons Daniel and Thomas, Jr., volunteered to fight against the French as part of the colonial militia, a collection of rural hoodlums known more for their

“unruly licentiousness” than for any military skills.¹³ Thomas also commanded one of his African-American slaves, Nemesis, to join the militia. On April 23, 1757, in a battle near what is now Frostburg, Maryland, Thomas, Jr., was killed. A few weeks later, Nemesis was also killed in battle.¹⁴

But in the end, with a lot of help from the British, the colonials defeated the French and their Indian allies. That was not the end of Thomas’s wartime suffering, however. In 1775, the Revolutionary War broke out. Thomas’s youngest son, Michael, was killed early in the war. Thomas and Hannah had lost two of their children to war and two to infant diseases. Thomas’s life had been filled with violence, heartbreak, and the struggle to make a living.

Yet in the end, Thomas’s quest for a river was successful. Before Michael died, he had staked out land on the Ohio River. Thomas’ heirs would farm fertile lands and later work in manufacturing plants along the Ohio River. The growing American economy, throwing out its tentacles along rivers, canals, and railroads, pulled the Cresaps along out of poverty into prosperity. Life has changed since the days of Thomas, who was my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather.

The majority of the world’s population have not yet said goodbye to the bad old days before development. The majority of the world’s population is not as fortunate as I to be borne along on rivers of prosperity. When those of us from rich countries look at poor countries today, we see our own past poverty. We are all the descendants of poverty. In the long run, we all come from the lower class. We embarked on the quest for growth to try to make poor countries grow out of poverty into riches.